

URGENT ACTION

PLOT TO KILL COMMUNITY ACTIVIST EXPOSED

Colombian paramilitaries have a plan to kill Enrique Petro, a community activist from the Afro-descendant communities in Colombia. His life is in danger.

On 9 May, a man with links to paramilitary groups operating in the north-western region of Urabá in Colombia, informed the Colombian human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (*Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz*) in Bogotá that a member of a paramilitary group known to him, together with other paramilitaries operating in the area, had received instructions to kill Enrique Petro, a prominent activist of the Afro-descendant communities in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins in Chocó Department, in the north-west of Colombia.

The informant said the paramilitaries have accused Enrique Petro of promoting the visit of national and international human rights organizations to the region to monitor the human rights violations linked to the massive development of African palm plantations in the area. The Justice and Peace Commission is one of the organizations that works with the Afro-descendant communities living in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó region and reports the human rights abuses and violations they suffer to national and international audiences.

Over the years, Enrique Petro and the other members of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó communities have been the target of repeated paramilitary death threats.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to provide effective protection to Enrique Petro in accordance with his wishes;
- Expressing concern for the safety of Enrique Petro;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the allegations that there is a plan to kill Enrique Petro, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JUNE 2010 TO:

Vice-President

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón
Vicepresidencia de la República
Carrera 8A No 7-27
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 565 7682

**Salutation: Dear Vice-president/
Estimado Sr. Vicepresidente**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Jaime Bermúdez
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San
Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 381 4721

**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

And copies to:

Acting Attorney General
Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Fiscal General de la Nación (e)
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C
Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (extension
2017)**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In April 2006 Enrique Petro gave four hectares of his own land to the returned displaced people from the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó region to create one of several “Humanitarian Zones”, enclosed areas in which inhabitants demand that the parties to the conflict respect their decision not to take sides in the hostilities. This is a way of protecting themselves and to send out a message to the warring parties that their rights as civilians must be respected.

Afro-descendant communities, along with Indigenous People and campesino (peasant farmer) communities are among those most affected by the Colombia's 45-year internal armed conflict. They have been subjected to enforced disappearance by the security forces or by paramilitaries (either acting alone or in collusion with the armed forces) and abducted by guerrilla groups.

In the past few years, many of those who fled their lands following their violent expulsion by paramilitaries and the security forces in the late 1990s have returned to the Afro-descendant communities of Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó. The communities have sought to defend their land rights and prevent the expansion of illegal African palm plantations and other economic activities within their territory. Many of their members have been threatened and killed as a result. In the last couple of years a number of members of the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó region who have complained about the occupation of their lands by African Palm growers and other economic interests have been killed by paramilitaries, who continue to maintain a strong presence in the region despite the large army presence in the area.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States has repeatedly called on the Colombian authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of members of the Afro-descendant communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó. However, the Colombian authorities have failed to take effective action to implement the Court's requests.

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