

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONIST KILLED, MANY MORE AT RISK

A trade unionist was shot dead on 17 June in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. Activists from 17 organizations in the region are at risk and need protection.

On 17 June at 5:30am, gunmen travelling on a motorcycle in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, Colombia, opened fire and shot **Nelson Camacho González** dead. Nelson Camacho was a member of the local branch of the oil worker's union USO, (*Unión Sindical Obrera*).

The killing came almost a month after a paramilitary group calling itself Joint Cleansing Command, (*Comando Conjunto de Limpieza*), issued a written death threat against 17 non-governmental human rights organizations, trade unions including USO, peasant farmer organizations, and organizations representing forcibly displaced people working in Barrancabermeja and the region of the Magdalena Medio, in the department of Santander.

The threat was received on 26 May and said: "Because in Barrancabermeja, the guerrilla is within all those organizations that call themselves displaced, human rights defenders, trade unions, and such a group of sons-of-bitches that think that they are untouchable. We will exterminate those that oppose development and security in the country. (...) We will not stop, we will exterminate you. Traitors of the homeland, you leave or you will be dead." (*Debido a que en Barrancabermeja esta la guerrilla en todas esas organizaciones que se hacen llamar dedesplazados (sic), defensoras de derechos humanos, sindicatos, ongs y toda una partida de hijueputas que se creen intocables. (...) no descansaremos los exterminamos. Traidores de la patria, o se van o se mueren.*)

The killing raises concerns for the safety of USO members in Barrancabermeja and other trade unionists, social activists and human rights defenders in the region.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of other members of USO and other trade union and human rights activists in the department of Santander;
- Urging the authorities to provide them with effective protection in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to carry out a full, swift and impartial investigation into the killing of Nelson Camacho González, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 AUGUST 2010 TO:

President

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República,
Palacio de Nariño,
Carrera 8 No.7-26,
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890

**Salutation: Dear President Uribe/
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe**

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 (dial extension
2017 on hearing the welcome message)**

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

And copies to:

Oil Worker's Union (USO)
Calle 38, No. 13-37,
Oficina 302
Bogotá
Colombia

Representative of the Permanent Office
of the ILO in Colombia

Sr. José Luis Daza
Avenida 82 N 12-18 Oficina 504
Bogotá, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 47/09. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/008/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During Colombia's internal armed conflict, paramilitary groups, operating alone or in collusion with the security forces, have frequently labelled human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations as guerrilla collaborators or supporters. These accusations have repeatedly been followed by serious human rights violations against members of these organizations, including threats and killings.

In Barrancabermeja, trade unions, organizations working with *campesinos* (peasant farmers) and non-governmental human rights organizations have repeatedly been the target of serious human rights violations in recent years.

Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

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