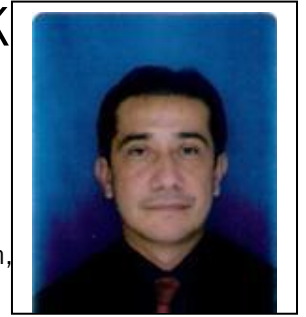


# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SURVIVES ATTACK

**William Cristancho Duarte, a human rights lawyer, has survived an attempt on his life on 10 December in northern Colombia. His life is in danger.**



**William Cristancho Duarte**, a human rights lawyer with the human rights organization *Corporación Compromiso*, was travelling by car to the Palogordo prison in the municipality of Girón, department of Santander. At 6:40am, as the car approached the outskirts of Girón, in an area known as Bahondo, an unidentified gunman positioned near to a bridge under construction fired two shots at the car. At least one bullet went through the rear window.

This attack increases concern for the safety of William Cristancho. On 26 October, he received death threats apparently relating to a case he is working on of the extrajudicial executions of two local peasants by members of the Colombian Army. He was followed by several people as he made his way to a hearing with local judicial officials in Piedecuesta Municipality, Santander Department, to discuss the case. After the meeting he received a call on his mobile; a man said "What are you doing son-of-a-bitch lawyer, enemy of the army?" (*Qué hace abogado hijueputa enemigo del ejercito?*). Some five minutes later, after leaving the building, about two blocks from the main square, a man approached William Cristancho and said "Make way son-of-a-bitch defender of guerrillas we are watching you closely" (*Abrase hijueputa defensor de guerrilleros lo tenemos en la mira*). A witness in the case was also threatened.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the security situation of William Cristancho Duarte and the witness, calling on the authorities to ensure protection measures for William Cristancho Duarte and the witness as agreed with them
- Urging the authorities to fully and impartially investigate the threats against William Cristancho and the witness, and the attack on William Cristancho and to bring those responsible to justice
- Demanding commitment for the authorities to take decisive action to end extrajudicial executions and guarantee the protection of those campaigning for justice in line with repeated United Nations human rights recommendations
- Reminding the authorities to fulfil their obligations to ensure human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JANUARY 2011 TO:

Señor Presidente Juan Manuel Santos  
 Presidente de la República,  
 Palacio de Nariño,  
 Carrera 8 No.7-26,  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 596 0631

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

Minister of Interior and Justice  
 Señor Germán Vargas Lleras  
 Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia  
 Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá  
 Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 599 8961

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

### And copies to:

Corporación Compromiso  
 Avenida González Valencia No 58-20  
 Bucaramanga  
 Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 242/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/035/2010/en>

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# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SURVIVES ATTACK

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

William Cristancho Duarte has been providing legal advice and representation for victims of the armed conflict in Colombia, especially for the families of victims of extrajudicial executions carried out by members of the armed forces and then presented as "guerrillas killed in combat". Among the cases he has been working on are the extrajudicial executions of Heriberto Portilla Maldonado and Orlando Maldonado Arias, who were extrajudicially executed and then presented as guerrillas killed in combat on 11 June 2002 in California Municipality in Santander Department. Orlando Maldonado Arias was killed in front of his wife and six children who were minors. He is also working on the case of the extrajudicial execution of the two brothers Teodolindo and Ovidio Murcia Ballén. Paramilitaries reportedly handed the brothers over to the Reyes Prieto Battalion on 10 April 2008 in Tagual, Landázuri Municipality. Santander Department. The brothers were later killed by the army.

During the armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted over four decades, extrajudicial executions have been carried out by the security forces in a widespread and systematic manner. They are part of the terror tactics used by the security forces as part of their counter-insurgency strategy. The Attorney General's Office is investigating more than 2,000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by the security forces. Repeatedly those campaigning for justice in cases of extrajudicial executions have been subject to death threats or have been killed by members of the security forces or paramilitaries working with them.

Further information on UA: 242/10 Index: AMR 23/038/2010 Issue Date: 16 December 2010

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