

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S CAR FIRED ON

Father Alberto Franco's car was fired at on 13 February, in the Colombian capital, Bogotá. He is the Executive Secretary of the human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (*Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz*).

Three gunshots hit the window of **Father Alberto Franco's** armour-plated car. He was not in the car at the time. Father Alberto Franco had publicly condemned the involvement of the previous administration's officials in the failure to return misappropriated collective lands to the Afro-descendant communities in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin, in the department of Chocó. He had recently been followed and his home and office had been watched.

This attack came days after an open letter was sent to the Inter American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in which the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission was accused of links to guerrillas. The letter named the NGO members Danilo Rueda and Abilio Peña, and human rights defender Father Javier Giraldo of the Centre for Investigation and Popular Education (*Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular*, CINEP).

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission campaigns on behalf of civilian communities in conflict regions in Colombia, whose members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee their homes by the security forces and paramilitary groups. Many of these communities have also been targeted by guerrilla groups.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety Father Alberto Franco, Danilo Rueda, Abilio Peña and the communities they are working with, as well as Father Javier Giraldo;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the 13 February attack and previous threats, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to provide effective protection to those who request it, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Reminding them 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 29 MARCH 2013 TO:

President

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 Foreign Affairs

María Ángela Holguín
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Palacio San Carlos
Calle 10 No. 5-51
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 381 4742

**Salutation: Estimada Señora Ministra/
Dear Minister**

And copies to:

Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz
Calle 61A, No. 17-26
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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The open letter was sent hours before the Inter American Court of Human Rights was due to hear the case of Marino López and "Operation Genesis". "Operation Genesis" was a military operation carried out jointly in 1997 by the Colombian armed forces, specifically the army's XVII Brigade, and paramilitary groups with the official aim of combating the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC). In August 2012, retired general Rito Alejo del Río was sentenced to 26 years in prison for involvement in the killing of peasant farmer Marino López by paramilitaries in the course of "Operation Genesis". Rito Alejo del Río has also repeatedly accused the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission of being guerrillas.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting efforts by Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in and around the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins to reclaim their lands. In these areas, paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Afro-descendent communities and have attempted to force them to grow African Palm, a cash crop used in products ranging from cooking oil to soap. Powerful mining interests are also trying to develop operations in these areas.

The human rights work of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission with these communities, especially on important cases of impunity against senior members of the security forces, has made them the target of threats and attacks.

During Colombia's long-running armed conflict, members of human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations have often been labelled guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitaries. As a result they are often killed, threatened, or subjected to enforced disappearance. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

Name: Father Alberto Franco, Danilo Rueda, Abilio Peña, Father Javier Giraldo

Gender m/f: m

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