

# URGENT ACTION

## ATTEMPT ON LIFE OF INDIGENOUS RIGHTS DEFENDER

The home of **Pedro Manuel Loperena**, an indigenous human rights defender in north-eastern Colombia, was attacked with a grenade on 11 May.

On 11 May, two unidentified individuals travelling on a motorbike threw a grenade at the home of **Pedro Manuel Loperena**, in the area of Don Carmelo in Valledupar, Cesar Department, in north-eastern Colombia.

Pedro Loperena is the coordinator of the Human Rights Commission of the indigenous organization representing the Wiwa Indigenous Peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range, Wiwa Yugumaiun Bunkuanarrua Tayrona Organization (Organización Wiwa Yugumaiun Bunkuanarrua Tayrona, OWYBT). The Human Rights Commission has been campaigning for justice in cases of human rights abuses including the extrajudicial executions of 11 members of the Wiwa community by members of the security forces between 15 February 2005 and 3 August 2006 and other human rights abuses committed by the security forces, paramilitaries operating with them and guerrilla forces. They are also opposing a number of mining, infrastructure and tourism projects in the Sierra Nevada area, which the Wiwa Peoples consider would disrupt their food sources, affect their traditional way of life and threaten their survival. Pedro Loperena has also been active in denouncing the continued operation of illegal armed groups in the areas in which the Wiwa population lives.

At the time of the attack Pedro Loperena's wife, a community human rights representative with the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*), together with their four children of seven, 10, 18 and 19 years of age were also in the house. None were harmed in the explosion.

The Wiwa Peoples elected a new leadership at a meeting in February. The Colombian Ministry of Interior has refused to recognize the new leadership.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Pedro Loperena, his family and other members of the OWYBT.
- Demanding that the authorities take decisive action to provide protection measures for Pedro Loperena, in line with his own wishes;
- Calling on them to order a full and impartial investigation into the attempt on Pedro Loperena's life to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JUNE 2013 TO:

#### President

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

**Salutation: Dear President**

**Santos/Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

#### Indigenous, Roma and Minorities Affairs

#### Directorate

Dr. Pedro Santiago Posada  
 Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas, ROM y Minorías, Ministerio del Interior  
 Calle 12B No 8-38,  
 Edificio Bancosol, Piso 6  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 341 9469

**Salutation: Dear Dr.Posada/**

**Estimado Dr. Posada.**

#### **And copies to:**

Wiwa Indigenous Organization:  
 OWYBT  
 Casa Indígena, Avenida Hurtado,  
 Valledupar (Cesar)  
 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

There is a long running armed conflict in Colombia, between the left-wing guerrillas and the armed forces, who at times operate in collusion with paramilitaries. Human rights defenders, including members of organizations representing Indigenous communities have often been threatened, subjected to enforced disappearance or killed. Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the threats against human rights organizations and trade unions that they are still operating.

The Wiwa Indigenous Peoples are one of four Indigenous Peoples inhabiting the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta along with the Kankuamo, Kogi and Arhuaco communities. Through the early 2000s to the present, the Wiwa population and other Indigenous Peoples in the area faced repeated death threats and killings at the hands of the security forces, operating in alliance with paramilitary forces, and guerrilla forces. The early 2000s saw an intense period of human rights violations committed against the Wiwa communities carried out by the security forces often in conjunction with paramilitaries and included forced displacement, killings and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Pedro Manuel Loperena was the survivor of a mass killing of 12 members of the Wiwa community carried out in September 2002 by paramilitaries and the army in the El Limón area of Ríohacha Municipality, department of La Guajira. In this context many members of the Wiwa population were forcibly displaced from an area in which the State funded the construction of a dam. Pedro Loperena has been campaigning for justice in this and other cases of human rights abuses against the Wiwa community carried out by the security forces, paramilitaries operating with them, and guerrilla forces. The Wiwa Peoples were provided with precautionary protection measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on 4 February 2005.

Name: Pedro Manuel Loperena

Gender m/f: male

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