

UA 256/07

Death threat/ fear for safety

COLOMBIA

Javier Correa (m), the National Union of Food Industry Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos*, SINALTRAINAL)
José Domingo Flores (m), leader of the Santander branch of SINALTRAINAL,
Members of their families
Other members of SINALTRAINAL

Javier Correa, President of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos*, SINALTRAINAL), received a death threat, and the son of regional SINALTRAINAL leader José Domingo Florez was abducted and beaten. There are fears that the lives of members of SINALTRAINAL are in danger.

On 27 September, Andrés Damian Flores Rodríguez, the 16-year-old son of José Domingo Florez, the SINALTRAINAL leader in Santander Department, was abducted by three masked gunmen. The men reportedly beat him before they received an order via a two-way radio, which said: "Take him around, beat him up and leave him the message" (*dénle un paseo, cásquenlo y déjenle el mensaje*). Andrés Damian Florez Rodríguez was released shortly afterwards. Before releasing him, the men told him: "Tell your father that we will not rest until we see you all in pieces" (*dígale a su papa que no descansaremos hasta verlos descuartizados*).

On 20 September, a written death threat was left at the home of José Domingo Flores, in the city of Bucaramanga in Santander Department. The message was signed by the *Aguilas Negras* (Black Eagles) paramilitary group. *Aguilas Negras* is a name assumed by many army-backed paramilitary structures following the supposed "demobilization" of the paramilitary umbrella organization group, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC).

On 25 September, a further written death threat, addressed to Javier Correa, was found in the offices of SINALTRAINAL in Bucaramanga. It read: "All orders are followed – communist guerrillas trade unionist façade – Javier Correa, stop your ideological discourse – you must leave the department – if not we will be obliged to carry out the military objective and at Christmas we will hand over the bodies of your families in a mass grave" (*toda orden se cumple – comunistas guerrilleros fachadas de sindicalistas – Javier Correa, callen el discurso ideologico guerrillero – se van del departamento – de lo contrario nos veremos obligados a cumplir el ojectivo military y le entregamos en Navidad a sus familias los cadaveres en una fosa comun*). The death threat bore the acronym of the AUC, and was signed by the *Aguilas Negras*.

Written death threats were also received by SINALTRAINAL members in Bucaramanga on 10 February and 26 July 2007.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the context of Colombia's 40-year-old armed conflict, trade unionists are frequently labelled as "subversive" by the security forces and paramilitaries. Such criticisms frequently coincide with periods of labour unrest or negotiations over working conditions. The labelling of union members as "subversive" is often followed by violations of their human rights, including threats and killings.

In recent years, members of SINALTRAINAL have been involved in a number of labour disputes, often with large multinational companies. These disputes have often coincided with reports of human rights violations against union members.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the authorities to protect Javier Correa, José Domingo Flores, their families, and other members of SINALTRAINAL, in accordance with the wishes of those at risk;
- calling on them to order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against SINALTRAINAL members and into the abduction of Andrés Damian Flores Rodríguez; to publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- calling on the authorities to fully apply the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties which recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders (including trade unionists) and protects their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

Vice-president of the Republic

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón

Vicepresidencia, Carrera 8A No 7-27, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 565 7682

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

Minister of Social Protection

Dr. Diego Palacio Betancourt

Ministerio de Protección Social

Ministerio de Protección Social, Carrera 13 No 32-76, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 336 8007

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Sir

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

SINALTRAINAL

Carrera 15# 35-18

Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 November 2007.
