

URGENT ACTION

DEATH THREAT AGAINST DANILO RUEDA

Colombian human rights defender Danilo Rueda received a death threat on 22 August in the capital, Bogotá. His life is in danger.

Two men approached human rights defender **Danilo Rueda** on 22 August in Bogotá. One of them put his hand on Danilo Rueda's head and said "Guerrilla fighter. Death to the Justicia y Paz people" (*Guerrillero. Muerte a los de Justicia y Paz*). Danilo Rueda is a member of the human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz). This death threat came after an attempt to kill another member of the NGO earlier this month in the Curvaradó River Basin, in the north-western department of Chocó.

Danilo Rueda and other members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission have been working with the communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin. Those members of the NGO based in the Curvaradó River Basin had to leave the area on 15 August due to the threats to kill the NGO members and the leaders of the river basin communities.

Paramilitaries are understood to have begun a forced recruitment campaign in the area, notably in Pueblo Nuevo, Necoclí municipality, and in El Totumo, Turbo municipality. The paramilitaries apparently set up a centre of operations in the Pueblo Pipón area, near the base of the 54 Battalion of the army's XVII Brigade in Llano Rico, Curvaradó.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for Danilo Rueda and other members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, as well as the leaders of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin communities, and urging the authorities to provide effective protection to those who request it, according to their wishes;
- Calling on them to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threat on 22 August, publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces in line with repeated United Nations human rights recommendations;
- 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 4 OCTOBER 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

**Salutation: Estimada Señora Ministra/
 Dear Minister
 And copies to:**

NGO

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. This is the first update of UA 215/13. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/036/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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-descendant 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.

In the past few years, many of those who fled their lands following violent expulsion by paramilitaries and the security forces in the late 1990s have returned to the Afro-descendant communities of Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó. The communities have sought to defend their land rights and prevent the expansion of illegal African palm plantations and other economic activities within their territory. Many of them have been threatened and killed as a result. Despite repeated orders by the Constitutional Court the land has not been returned to the communities.

In recent years a number of people from the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó region who have complained about the occupation of their lands by African palm growers and other economic interests have been killed by paramilitaries, who have maintained a strong presence in the region despite the large army presence. The XVII Brigade has recently built a new military base in the area. Members of this brigade's 54 Battalion have been seen socialising with a well-known paramilitary leader in the area.

In April 2006 the first of several "Humanitarian Zones" – enclosed areas whose inhabitants demand that the parties to the conflict respect their decision not to take sides in the hostilities – was set up. This is a means of protection; it also sends a message to the warring parties that their rights as civilians must be respected.

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

Names: Danilo Rueda (m) and other members of the NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission and the leaders of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin communities

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 215/13 Index: AMR 23/039/2013 Issue Date: 23 August 2013