

URGENT ACTION

COLOMBIA MUST PROTECT LAWYER AT RISK

A Colombian lawyer who works with the families of those who have been killed by security forces is in grave danger. An inmate who was recently released from prison gave information about a plot to kill him.

On 9 February, human rights lawyer **Bayron Ricardo Góngora** learned of a plot to kill him. He works for the human rights organization *Corporación Jurídica Libertad*, CJL (Liberty Legal Corporation) which, among other activities, represents political prisoners in the city of Medellín, Antioquia department. That day a lawyer working in another organization told Bayron Ricardo Góngora that a recently released prisoner who knew Bayron Ricardo Góngora from his work at the prison, informed him about a plot to kill Bayron Ricardo Góngora.

According to the information he was given, some of the common criminals held in the prison had been instructed to provide information about Bayron Ricardo Góngora, including his daily routine and his visits to the prison, to an illegal armed group operating in the neighbourhood of Campo Valdés, northeast Medellín. According to the prisoners, the armed group has received money to kill the lawyer. Two days later, a close contact of the CJL in Campo Valdés told members of the organization that he had heard the same information about the murder plot

Bayron Ricardo Góngora has also been working on cases of people extrajudicially executed by the security forces since 2007. At the moment he represents relatives of the victims in 65 such cases. In February 2009 he filed a complaint with the Attorney's General Office against two Majors in the Colombian army, who were allegedly involved in extrajudicial executions in 2004 and 2005. He also asked the Attorney's General Office to investigate the former Commander of the Colombian National Army, Mario Montoya Uribe, in relation to extrajudicial executions in March 2009. Bayron Ricardo Góngora has presented several appeals in court in order to press the Attorney General's Office to begin investigating the case. As a result of his work on other cases, members of the security forces have been brought to justice for their involvement in extrajudicial executions.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of the lawyer Bayron Ricardo Góngora, and his colleagues at the *Corporación Jurídica Libertad*, and urging the authorities to provide them with effective protection, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the allegations that there is a plan to kill Bayron Ricardo Góngora, to make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to adhere to their obligations as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders - to recognize the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and defenders' right to carry out their activities without obstacles or fear of reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 APRIL 2010 TO:

Vice-President

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón
Vicepresidencia de la República
Carrera 8A No 7-27
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 565 7682

**Salutation: Dear Mr Vice-president/
Estimado Sr. Vicepresidente**

Acting Attorney General

Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Fiscal General de la Nación (e)
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C
Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 Fax: +57 1 570 2000
(extension 2017)**

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

And copies to:

Minister of Defense

Dr. Gabriel Silva Luján
Ministerio de Defensa
Avenida El Dorado, Carrera 52 OFI.
217, Centro Administrativo Nacional
(CAN), Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 266 10 03 (ask: "me
da tono de fax por favor")**

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

In 2008, the Colombian media reported that dozens of young men from Soacha, near the capital, Bogota, had been extrajudicially executed by the security forces, bringing the issue to public attention for the first time.

These revelations finally forced the government to acknowledge that the security forces were responsible for extrajudicial executions. In most of the cases the killings, which the army presented as "guerrillas killed in combat," were apparently carried out in collusion with paramilitary groups or criminal gangs; in some cases, as a reward for having "killed a guerrilla" soldiers received money, extra days of holiday and letters of congratulation from their superiors.

The scale of the scandal was such that it led, in October 2008, to the sacking of 27 army officers, including three generals, and in November of that year forced the resignation of the head of the army, General Mario Montoya, who had been linked to human rights violations. Colombia's President, Alvaro Uribe, said the Soacha killings would be investigated by the civilian courts rather than by the military justice system, which often claims jurisdiction in such cases but abandons them without any serious investigation.

The Attorney General's Office is investigating more than 2,000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by the security forces.

In Colombia there are many human rights organizations that are working on cases of extrajudicial executions; their work is aimed at bringing to justice those responsible for these crimes and ensuring that the relatives of the victims can obtain truth, justice and reparation. The CJL is one of these organizations and Bayron Ricardo Góngora one of the lawyers that works to end impunity regarding these human rights violations.

UA: 49/10 Index: AMR 23/010/2010 Issue Date: 5 March 2010

