

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES THREATEN COMMUNITIES

Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins in North West Colombia are being threatened and harassed by paramilitaries.

On 20 April 2011, around 150 paramilitaries set up camp in Curvaradó River Basin, Chocó Department. They have since used this camp as a base for operations in the area and despite a heavy military presence and patrols by the XVII Brigade of the Colombian Army, no apparent attempt has been made by the authorities to confront them.

On 5 May, 11 paramilitaries surrounded **Sixta Tulia Pérez** and **Blanca Rebolledo**, two women leaders of the Afro-descendant community in Caracolí, in the Curvaradó River Basin. The paramilitaries tried to rip their clothes off and grabbed a child who was with them. One of them hit Sixta Tulia Pérez with a whip. They told them: *"This is a warning ... the boss has money to order the government what to do... to get you out of here."* Later that day the same paramilitaries threatened women leaders in front XVII Brigade soldiers, who did not react when asked to help. On 7 May, the same perpetrators tried to surround Blanca Rebolledo again. She ran away and sought refuge with community leader **Liria Rosa García**. When the paramilitaries realized that they had phoned for help, they said they would cut-off Liria Rosa's head.

On 4 May **Albeiro Jumi**, the secretary of the governor of the Indigenous community of Alto Guayabal, was accused of being a guerrilla by a police officer as he was travelling to the town of Mutatá, Antioquia Department. The community of Alto Guayabal is part of the Urada-Jiguamiandó Indigenous Reservation (*resguardo*) situated next to the Afro-descendant area of Jiguamiandó. Members of the *resguardo* have recently been accused of being "guerrillas and son-of-a-bitch informers" by soldiers of the XVII Brigade. Amnesty International fears these accusations could encourage physical attacks on members of the *resguardo*, especially on those who have opposed the development of international mining interests in the area, at a time of large-scale paramilitary presence in the area.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of the Afro descendant and Indigenous communities of the Collective Land Titles of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó and the Resguardo of Urada-Jiguamiandó through measures deemed appropriate by those under threat;
- Demanding a full and impartial investigation into the death threats and harassment with those responsible brought to justice;
- Reminding the authorities that their obligations to human rights defenders are laid out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolutions
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other bodies.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 JUNE 2011 TO:

<u>President</u>	<u>Minister of Interior and Justice</u>	<u>Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development</u>
Presidente Juan Manuel Santos	Señor Germán Vargas Lleras	Señor Juan Camilo Restrepo
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia	Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá Colombia	Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, Avenida Jiménez No 7-65 , Piso 3, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631	Fax: +57 1 599 8961	Fax: +57 1 286 2649
Salutation: Dear President Santos/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos	Salutation: Dear Minister Vargas /Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas	Salutation: Dear Minister Restrepo /Estimado Sr. Ministro Restrepo

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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 201/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/029/2010/en>

Field Code Changed

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Date: 17 May 2011

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the 1990s, paramilitaries, either acting alone or in collusion with the armed forces, have been responsible for killings, death threats and the forced displacement of Afro-descendant and Indigenous People living in the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó River Basins and the *resguardo* of Urada-Jiguamiandó. As a means to guarantee their safety, members of the Afro-descendant communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó created Humanitarian Zones to assert their rights as civilians not to be drawn into the conflict. 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 their members have been threatened and killed as a result. In the last couple of years a number of people living in 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 continue to maintain a strong presence in the region despite the large army presence. Those living in the *resguardo* of Urada-Jiguamiandó have also been subject to repeated death threats and several have been killed since the late 1990s.

The recent large-scale paramilitary presence an hour away from the Humanitarian Zones of Caracolí, Tesoro-Camelias and Caño Claro-Andalucía, and the area of El Firme and No Hay Como Dios, in the Curvaradó River Basin, comes in the wake of the visit of government ministers to the area to make commitments to return lands stolen, often violently, by paramilitaries operating on behalf of African Palm, banana and cattle-ranching interests operating in the region. The return of these lands was ordered by the Constitutional Court in a ruling in May 2010. Reports indicate that paramilitaries are plotting to kill Afro-descendants campaigning for the restitution of stolen lands. In recent weeks, attempts have been made on the lives of leaders and people living in the Humanitarian Zones. In 2008, Walberto Hoyos Rivas, a leader of the Curvaradó River Basin Community was killed by paramilitaries.

Afro-descendant communities, along with Indigenous People and peasant farmer communities are among those most affected by Colombia's long running internal armed conflict. They have been subjected to enforced disappearance by the security forces or by paramilitaries (either acting alone or in collusion with the armed forces) and abducted by guerrilla groups.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States has repeatedly called on the Colombian authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of members of the Afro-descendant communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó. However, the Colombian authorities have failed to take effective action to implement the Court's requests.

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