

URGENT ACTION

MASS DEATH THREATS TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

At least 80 human rights defenders received death threats by email on or just prior to Colombia's Human Rights Day on 9 September. Paramilitaries declared them a military target.

On 8 September at least 80 human rights defenders throughout Colombia received an email in which they were told "we are going to finish you off one by one" (*los vamos a acabar uno a uno*) and "we know where each one of you and your families are, prepare to die" (*sabemos donde [sic] estan [sic] cada uno de Ustedes y sus familias preparense [sic] para morir*). On 9 September, Colombia's Human Rights Day, two further emails threatening dozens of human rights defenders were sent, signed by the paramilitary group Black Eagles Capital Bloc (Águilas Negras Bloque Capital). In one of these threats, the defenders were given an ultimatum to stop their work within 15 days and told: "stop bothering with your fake politics, stop fucking about with your story of human rights defenders" (*no jodan más con sus políticas chimbas, dejen de mariquiar [sic] con su cuento de defensores de derechos humanos*). The other threat sent on 9 September included "invitations to the funeral" of three Afro-descendant human rights defenders, which would take place on 18 September. In all three death threats the human rights defenders were accused of being guerrilla fighters.

Those threatened include a wide spectrum of well-known human rights defenders, trade unionists, staff working for parliamentarians who have campaigned on human rights issues, and community leaders. They also included representatives of victims of human rights abuses who have travelled to Havana, Cuba, where the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) are negotiating a peace agreement. According to newspaper reports, thirty members of staff at the Office of the High Counsellor for Human Rights at the Bogotá Mayor's Office (Alta Consejería para las Víctimas de la Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá) also received a separate threat "inviting them to their own funeral", also on 18 September.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of those threatened and urging the authorities to immediately provide effective protection for them in accordance with their wishes and needs;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Urging the authorities to take action against paramilitary forces and break any links between them and the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 OCTOBER 2014 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**

Attorney General

Eduardo Montealegre
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)
 Bloque C Piso 4
 Bogotá, Colombia

Fax +57 1 570 2000 (when recorded
 voice answers, dial ext 2023)
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
 Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

Minister- Counsellor for Post Conflict, Human Rights and Security

General (r) Oscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo
 Ministro Consejero para el Postconflicto,
 Derechos Humanos y Seguridad,
 Calle 7 6-64
 Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 596 0631
**Salutation: Dear Minister
 Counsellor/Estimados Sr. Ministro
 Consejero**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the long-running armed conflict in Colombia, human rights defenders, as well as Indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities, have endured the brunt of the conflict. All the warring parties – the security forces, either alone or in collusion with paramilitary groups, and the guerrilla forces – are responsible for abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including killings, enforced disappearances or abductions, torture, forced displacement and crimes of sexual violence.

The security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled members of human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Numerous human rights defenders have been killed after being labelled guerrilla sympathizers. Guerrillas have also threatened and killed human rights defenders.

According to the NGO Somos Defensores, some 30 human rights defenders were killed in the first six months of 2014, while at least 70 human rights defenders, including community, Indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders, were killed in 2013. The National Trade Union School (Escuela Nacional Sindical, ENS) reported that 27 members of trade unions were killed in 2013. Land activists and those working on impunity have been particularly vulnerable to attacks. These attacks, as well as the misuse of the legal system to bring bogus charges against human rights defenders and the theft of sensitive information from NGO offices, continue to undermine the work of human rights organizations.

The Colombian state has a protection programme which provides security to thousands of individuals at risk, including human rights defenders. However, this programme continues to suffer from serious weaknesses. For example, the effectiveness of this programme will continue to be limited as long as the perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses remain confident that they will not be brought to justice.

The government issued a statement rejecting the latest threats, in which they recognized the work of human rights defenders and called for steps to be taken to implement protection measures and investigate the threats. It is important that the government provides the relevant state authorities with the necessary resources to investigate the threats and to ensure effective protection to those mentioned in the emails and others threatened at this time.

The Colombian government and the FARC have officially been engaged in peace talks since October 2012. In August 2014 a delegation of 12 victims travelled to Havana, Cuba, where the negotiations are being held, to provide their testimonies.

Name: Colombian human rights defenders
Gender m/f: both

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