

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

Members of the Regional Human Rights Corporation (CREDHOS) in Barrancabermeja, Colombia, have received new death threats from paramilitaries.

On 1 February, **Wilfran Cadena**, vice-president of the Regional Human Rights Corporation (Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, CREDHOS) arrived at CREDHOS's office in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, and found several flyers that had been left there. The flyers were signed by a paramilitary group calling itself the "Urban Commands" (Comandos Urbanos) and contained a picture of two skulls. The flyer said: "Look son-of-a-bitch guerrillas, be careful - we are here to clean the city of guerrillas like you people hiding at CREDHOS" ("*Miren guerrilleros hijueputascuidense [sic] ... nosotros estamos aca [sic] para limpiar la ciudad... de guerrilleros como ustedes que se esconden en credhos*").

The flyer named **David Ravelo** and his cousin, **María Ravelo Grimaldo**, both members of CREDHOS, and also targeted the Peasant Farmers' Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (*Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra*, ACVC). It said: "you cousin of the gonorrhoea guerrilla, David Ravelo, we know you go to the neighbourhoods inviting people to take part in that human rights shit. María Ravelo, any moment things are going to change, we know about your pictures and that you are associating with those dogs and sons-of-bitches at the ACVC." ("*usted ... la prima del gonorrea guerrillero ese del David Ravelo usted anda por los barrios de barranca [sic] invitando a gente a meterse en esa mierda de los derechos humanos ... yen [sic] cualquier momento señora maría [sic] Ravelo le va a caer el tablón ... sabemos de sus fotos y de sus compañeros perros hijueputas de la ACVC*"). Two armed men approached María Ravelo's daughter, **Anny Lizeth Vera Ravelo**, on 1 February. They gave her a flyer and said that her mother should stop the "game".

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of María Ravelo Grimaldo, her family and other members of CREDHOS and ACVC, and call on the authorities to protect them, in line with their wishes;
- Urge the Colombian authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the death threats against María Ravelo Grimaldo and other members of CREDHOS; to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Remind the Colombian authorities to fulfil their obligations regarding the protections of human rights defenders as specified in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, to which Colombia is a state party;
- Urge the authorities 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 intergovernmental organizations

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 MARCH 2012 TO:

President

Señor 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**

Defence Minister

Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

**Salutation: Dear Minister Pinzón/
 Sr. Ministro Pinzón**

And copies to:

NGO
 CREDHOS
 Av. 52 No. 25-49
 Barrancabermeja, Santander
 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 14/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/002/2012/en>

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CREDHOS is a regional human rights organization campaigning for justice for human rights violations around Barrancabermeja and the Magdalena Medio area. Over the years, members of CREDHOS have repeatedly faced death threats. David Ravelo Crespo, a member of CREDHOS, has been detained by the authorities, accused of links with guerrilla groups, since September 2010. Human rights organizations have expressed concerns that the case against David Ravelo is part of an effort to discredit and silence CREDHOS. The security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders and trade unionists they consider to be siding with their enemies. The recent threats against CREDHOS come shortly after the organization participated in the commemoration of the 23 anniversary of the killings of 12 judicial officials in Santander Department in 1989, known as the La Rochela massacre, on 18 January. The killings were carried out by paramilitaries operating with the support of the armed forces.

Abelardo Sánchez Serrano and other members of CREDHOS received death threats in this context. On 13 January Abelardo Sánchez Serrano was on his way to the CREDHOS office when two men on a motorbike approached him. One of the men pointed a pistol at him and told him he had 72 hours to leave the city.

In the past few months María Ravelo Grimaldi, who is also president of the Barrancabermeja Branch of the National Association of Solidarity Help (*Asociación Nacional de Ayuda Solidaria*, ANDAS) a human rights NGO supporting forcibly displaced people, has been working with forcibly displaced people in the Community Villa Dignidad in the municipality of Barrancabermeja. Human rights defenders working with forcibly displaced populations have repeatedly faced death threats and serious human rights violations carried out by the security forces and paramilitaries operating with their support.

During the armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted over four decades, extrajudicial executions have been carried out by the security forces in a widespread and systematic manner. They are part of the terror tactics used by the security forces as part of their counter-insurgency strategy. The Attorney General's Office is investigating more than 2,000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by the security forces. Those campaigning for justice in cases of extrajudicial executions have been subject to death threats or have been killed by members of the security forces or paramilitaries working with them.

Name: members of CREDHOS including María Ravelo Grimaldi, David Ravelo, Wilfran Cadena and Anny Lizeth Vera Ravelo
Gender m/f: María Ravelo Grimaldi and Anny Lizeth Vera Ravelo (f), David Ravelo and Wilfran Cadena (m)

Further information on UA: 14/12 Index: AMR 23/006/2012 Issue Date: 6 February 2012