

PUBLIC

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UA 163/05 Fear for Safety/Death Threats

COLOMBIA David RAVELO CRESPO (m), Secretary General of the *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation
Georgina MORALES (f), student, member of CREDHOS
Other members of CREDHOS

Killed: Stivenson TORRES (m), member of CREDHOS

David Ravelo Crespo, the Secretary General of the non-governmental human rights organisation *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation, and Georgina Morales, a member of the organisation, have received death threats. Their lives and those of other members of CREDHOS may be in danger.

In recent months David Ravelo Crespo has received a number of telephone calls at the CREDHOS office in the city of Barrancabermeja, department of Santander, from unidentified callers threatening him with death. The most recent threat was received on 31 May, when a man called the office and said that David Ravelo Crespo would be killed. At the time of this call, David Ravelo Crespo was in hiding in the capital Bogotá as he feared for his safety. In addition, he has reported being followed continually by suspected members of army-backed paramilitary groups operating in Barrancabermeja.

The life of Georgina Morales, a student leader and a member of CREDHOS' youth wing, is also in danger. In February 2005 an attempt was made on her life but the attack failed when the gunman was forced to flee after other people intervened. On 24 May two armed men on a motorbike approached a classmate of Georgina Morales calling her by Georgina's name. When the men realized that she was not Georgina, they instructed her to tell Georgina to leave Barrancabermeja within three days. Because of the danger to her life Georgina Morales has been forced to flee Barrancabermeja and is currently in hiding.

Concerns for the safety of CREDHOS members are heightened by the death of Stivenson Torres, a CREDHOS member who was reportedly killed on 24 April 2005 by alleged paramilitaries in Barrancabermeja.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders belonging to CREDHOS have suffered repeated death threats from army-backed paramilitary groups, who have consolidated control over the city of Barrancabermeja in recent years despite the fact that it is heavily militarized. Several members of the organization have been killed in the past and those who continue their work have stated that they can only do so if the international community continues to support them.

Threats against CREDHOS and other human rights organizations stem from their work in documenting and exposing the human rights crisis in Barrancabermeja and surrounding areas. In March 2005 CREDHOS and the *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular*, CINEP, Research and Popular Education Centre, launched a report which documented at least 170 cases of forced "disappearances" in Barrancabermeja between 2000 and 2003, the majority of which were committed by army-backed paramilitaries.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of David Ravelo Crespo, Georgina Morales and other members of the non-governmental human rights organization CREDHOS, following the death threats against them and the killing of CREDHOS member Stivenson Torres;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all measures deemed appropriate by David Ravelo Crespo, Georgina Morales and other members of the organization are taken to guarantee their safety;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the threats and into the killing of Stivenson Torres, with the results of the investigation made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe/ Dear President Uribe

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Hugo Heliodoro Aguilar Naranjo

Gobernador del Departamento de Santander

Gobernación de Santander, Calle 37, No. 10-30, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 842 843

Salutation: Dear Governor Aguilar / Sr. Gobernador Aguilar

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (you will hear a message in Spanish asking you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

CREDHOS

AA 505, Barrancabermeja, Santander, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 July 2005.