

URGENT ACTION

MURDERED MAN'S BROTHER THREATENED

A man whose brother was killed by the security forces has received death threats. His life is in danger.

John Smith Porras Bernal had a letter passed under his door on 2 November. It read, "It doesn't matter that you hide and lock yourself in this apartment because you will go out and we will catch you, because we told you... if you don't want anything to happen to you, run away as soon as possible because you have little time. Do not forget we are not playing because we have already identified you, believe us we are not playing..." (*asi se esconda y se encierre en eses apartamento usted sale porque sale y hay te vamos a coger porque se le advirtió... si no quieres que te pase nada larguese lo más pronto posible porque le queda muy poco tiempo no lo olvide no estamos jugando porque ya lo tenemos fichado crealo no estamos jugando...*)

John Smith Porras Bernal's home is in Soacha, a poor area near the capital, Bogotá. He received a written threat there on 20 October, which told him to "take the consequences," referring to a letter sent on 10 October, which had told him that he and other people from Soacha whose relatives had been extrajudicially executed by the army should keep quiet: they had not done so.

John Smith's brother, Fair Leonardo Porras Bernal, was last seen on 8 January 2008: he was 26. On 16 September that year his mother was told that his body had been found in a mass grave in the Norte de Santander department in the north-east of the country. The army claimed that he had been a member of an illegal armed group and had died in combat on 12 January 2008. An investigation by the Attorney General's office showed that this was untrue, and that the army had killed him and a number of other young men from Soacha and elsewhere in the country. They had been lured from their homes by false promises which included work in another city; in fact they were to be taken to be killed by the army, who would present them as guerrillas killed in combat.

Fair Leonardo Porras' mother, Luz Marina Porras Bernal, has joined other mothers from Soacha whose sons have been killed by the army, to campaign for justice for her son. John Smith Porras has been helping her: the threats he has received may be intended to stop Luz Marina Porras Bernal from campaigning for justice.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the threats received by John Smith Porras Bernal, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take decisive action to guarantee the safety of John Smith Porras, his mother Luz Marina Porras Bernal and other relatives of victims of extrajudicial executions, in accordance with the wishes of those in danger;
- Calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the allegations of extrajudicial executions by the army, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 DECEMBER 2009 TO:

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gabriel Silva
Avenida El Dorado, Carrera 52 OFI.
217, Centro Administrativo Nacional
(CAN), Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 266 0351
Salutation: Dear Dr Silva/
Estimado Dr. Silva

Attorney General

Sr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago (e)
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía
General de la Nación
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá,
Colombia
Fax: +57 1 414 91 08
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Jaime Bermúdez
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San
Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 381 47 21
Salutation: Dear Sr. Bermúdez/
Estimado Sr. Bermúdez

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2008 the killings of dozens of young men from Soacha finally forced the government to acknowledge that the security forces were responsible for extrajudicial executions. 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. President 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.

According to reports the Attorney General's Office is investigating more than 2000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by security forces.

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