

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONISTS RECEIVE DEATH THREATS

Five trade unionists received death threats from the Urabeños – a paramilitary group – in Bugalagrande Municipality, south-western Colombia on 4 November.

On 4 November, **Mauricio Valencia Tamayo**, the President of the Bugalagrande branch of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, SINALTRAINAL*) received a death threat via text message. The text message said, "Guerrilla son of a bitch disguised as trade unionist, company wrecker, either you stop bugging us and heating up the protest or we will fill you with lead. Go away son of a bitch. The Urabeños" (*"Guerrillero hijueputa disfrazado de sindicalista, acaba empresa o dejás de joder y estar calentando la plaza o te rellenamos a plomo, abrite perro hijueputa. Los urabe.os [sic]"*). The same text message was also received by **Wilson Alberto Riaño**, **Omar Rengifo**, **Edwin Mejía** and **Julio López**, also members of SINALTRAINAL.

Four of the trade unionists work for Nestle; Julio López is a former employee. Members of SINALTRAINAL have been protesting since 22 October in front of Nestlé in Bugalagrande, Valle del Cauca Department and Bogotá, demanding that various agreements made with the company are respected. Employees of other companies, who are also members of SINALTRAINAL, have also received repeated death threats.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against Mauricio Valencia Tamayo, Wilson Alberto Riaño, Omar Rengifo, Edwin Mejía and Julio López, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Demanding that they provide protection for those threatened, as agreed with those in danger;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 DECEMBER 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 (keep trying)

Salutation: Dear President

Santos/Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos

Labour Minister

Rafael Pardo Rueda
 Ministerio de Trabajo
 Carrera 14, No.99–33
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 489 3900 ext 2320

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado

Ministro

And copies to:

SINALTRAINAL
 Carrera 15 # 35–18
 Bogotá, Colombia

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

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

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trade unions, human rights organizations, and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by government officials, as well as by the security forces and paramilitaries. Such accusations have often been followed by threats or attacks against human rights activists. Colombia is one of the countries with the highest rate of killings of trade unionists. Trade unionists face repeated death threats and killings in the context of labour disputes and improvements of socio-economic rights.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the threats against human rights organizations and trade unions, in Valle de Cauca and elsewhere, that they are still operating. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for numerous killings and threats in south-western Colombia in recent years.

SINALTRAINAL was founded in 1982 to defend and promote food workers' labour rights. Since its creation, at least 22 SINALTRAINAL members have been killed or forcibly disappeared; dozens have been victims of attacks or have received threats.

In recent years, SINALTRAINAL has been involved in a number of labour disputes, often with large multinational companies. These disputes have often coincided with reports of threats and attacks against members of the union, mainly by members of the security forces or paramilitary groups.

Luciano Enrique Romero Molina, a leader of the Cesar branch of SINALTRAINAL was killed in September 2005. His body bore more than 40 stab wounds. He had been employed by Nestlé-CICOLAC in Valledupar, Cesar Department.

Name: Mauricio Valencia Tamayo, Wilson Alberto Riaño, Omar Rengifo, Edwin Mejía and Julio López
Gender m/f: m