

URGENT ACTION

DEATH THREATS RECEIVED IN 'HUMANITARIAN ZONE' Three human rights defenders have been threatened by paramilitaries in the port city of Buenavenutra, southern Colombia, following the creation of the Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero, a civilian initiative to protect the mainly Afro-descendant community.

On 22 April, a paramilitary threatened to kill human rights defender **Danilo Rueda** of the NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz) in the **Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero** in the Comuna 4 District of the city of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. Danilo Rueda and other human rights defenders were following a paramilitary who had tried to recruit children in the Humanitarian Zone. At the edge of the Humanitarian Zone, the paramilitary drew a machete and said "If you come closer I will cut you up" (*Si se acerca lo pico*). On 12 April, 16-year-old Carlos Andrés Angarita Jimenes was tortured, killed and dismembered by paramilitaries near the humanitarian zone, in spite of the strong presence of the armed forces in the area. His killing is one of many to have taken place in the city.

Since the creation of the Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero on 13 April, human rights defender **Orlando Castillo** has received repeated death threats by paramilitaries. On 22 April the community of the Humanitarian Zone was informed that there was an order to kill Orlando Castillo. He has also received threats in phone calls and paramilitaries told others in the community that they would kill him. On 23 April human rights defender **Luis Yasmani Grueso Sinisterra**, who has also been working with the community, was told by a relative that paramilitaries had also threatened to kill him.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Danilo Rueda, Orlando Castillo, Luis Yasmani Grueso Sinisterra and other human rights defenders and the mainly Afro-descendant community of Buenaventura, and urging the authorities to provide effective protection for them in accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into paramilitary threats against the human rights defenders and inhabitants of Buenaventura, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging the government to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 JUNE 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

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

Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz
Calle 61A, No. 17-26
Bogotá, Colombia

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

Buenaventura is an important port on the Colombian Pacific Coast in the department of Valle del Cauca. There are a number of large-scale infrastructure projects being developed in the city, which still has a strong presence of paramilitary groups which have been able to operate despite the presence of large contingents of security forces personnel.

There have been reports of numerous killings, forced displacements and forced disappearances in the city. A report issued by the Human Rights Ombudsman (Defensor del Pueblo) in November 2012 estimated that more than 1,000 families had been forcibly displaced in the two weeks leading up to the report's publication. Since then, the human rights situation has remained critical and in the first week of November 2013 over 2,000 people were also forcibly displaced from their homes.

Victims are taken to houses known as "casas de pique" where witnesses hear the screams of those being tortured to death. The bodies are often dumped in clandestine cemeteries or in the sea, which means that the whereabouts of many of the victims remain unknown.

Despite the strong presence of the security forces, which includes not only the police but also Marine Infantry units (since 1999 there have been around 1,500 troops in Buenaventura), paramilitaries have been able to operate continuously with little action by the authorities to stop their activities. Witnesses have stated that although the security forces know who the paramilitaries are and where the paramilitary commanders live, they have taken no decisive action to confront them. Similarly, the authorities know where the houses used by paramilitaries to kill their victims are located as well as knowing where the clandestine cemeteries used by the paramilitaries are situated.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been accompanying Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in different parts of the country who are at risk of serious human rights abuses and violations, including forced displacement. They have participated in the initiatives to create Humanitarian Zones in different parts of the country in an attempt to protect civilians at risk.

The Humanitarian Zone of Puente Nayero in the Barrio La Playita was created on 13 April, in a public event with the participation of representatives from the Catholic Church, as well as local, national and international human rights organizations. Following the increase of human rights abuses and violations in the area since November 2013, including killings, forced displacements and forced disappearances, leaders of the community visited other humanitarian zones in Colombia and decided to create one in Buenaventura as a means to guarantee the protection of the civilian population.

Name: Danilo Rueda (m), Orlando Castillo (m), Luis Yasmani Grueso Sinisterra (m), Afro-descendant community
Gender m/f: both

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