

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

**José Santos Caicedo and Armando Caracas Carabalí, who are leaders of the Black Communities Process (PCN) and Aníbal Vega, the legal representative of the community council of La Toma, Suárez Municipality in Colombia, are believed to be at risk after receiving death threats.**

On 15 July **José Santos Caicedo** and **Armando Caracas Carabalí**, leaders of the Black Communities Process (Proceso de Comunidades Negras, PCN) received a text message saying: "You know that everything has a price, but you have to pay with blood" (*ya sabes q [sic] todo tiene precio pero tu pago es con sangre*). Armando Caracas Carabalí has also been receiving threats on the phone since 7 July. PCN is an umbrella organization of grassroots Afro-Colombian organizations that seek to defend the territorial, cultural and human rights of Afro-Colombians.

**Aníbal Vega**, the legal representative of the community council of La Toma, Suárez Municipality, Cauca Department was told in a phone call on 15 July "... you of the community council, those who oppose the machine work in Ovejas River. One has to remove the stones in the way so that they don't get in the way" (*ustedes son los del Consejo Comunitario, los que se oponen a que las maquinas trabajen en el río Ovejas. Las piedras en el camino hay que quitarlas para que no estorben*).

Two days before the threats, 60 community leaders from the council of La Toma met with owners of the land on which four bulldozers digging for gold have been present since June, and planned a meeting with the owners of the bulldozers. Afro-descendant Communities in Suárez Municipality are opposing the development of industrial gold mining by outside economic interests, which they consider will have a negative impact on their livelihoods and way of life. Members of the community council of La Toma and PCN have been campaigning against the presence of bulldozers in La Toma, having blocked two bulldozers previously, which had been in the area since May 2011.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Demand the authorities take measures considered appropriate by those under threat, to guarantee the safety of José Santos Caicedo, Armando Caracas Carabalí, Aníbal Vega and other threatened members of PCN and the community of La Toma;
- Call on the authorities to launch a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against members of the Community Council of La Toma and PCN, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Remind the authorities that action to guarantee the right to free prior informed consent and consultation of the Afro-descendant community of La Toma is in line with the 1989 International Labour Organization's Convention No.169 and Colombian jurisprudence;
- Remind the Colombian authorities to fulfil their obligations to protect human rights defenders as specified in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 SEPTEMBER 2011 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**

#### Attorney General

Señora Viviane Morales  
 Fiscal General de la Nación  
 Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán  
 No. 52-01) Bloque C  
 Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 570 2091

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/  
 Estimada Sra. Fiscal Genera**

#### **And copies to:**

#### NGO

Procesos de Comunidades Negras  
 (PCN)  
 Calle 23 Número 5-85 of. 307  
 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

In recent years, Afro descendant and Indigenous communities in Valle del Cauca and Cauca Departments opposing the development of large-scale economic projects including gold-mining interests have received several death threats.

La Toma is an Afro descendant community in the municipalities of Suárez in Cauca Department. Small scale mining of gold is the main source of income for approximately 1,300 families there. Community activists representing the Afro-descendant inhabitants of this affected community have complained that the authorities have issued mining rights to companies to exploit minerals on the lands they claim without the free prior informed consent of the population. Over recent years community members have faced repeated threats as they have opposed the development of industrial gold-mining, including by multinational companies, on their land. In a ruling of 29 January 2009 (Auto 005) the Colombian Constitutional Court underlined the fact that Afro-descendant communities possess constitutionally-recognized rights to collective property of their ancestral lands and the right to prior consent regarding economic projects, including mining projects that would have a serious impact on their social, economic and cultural rights.

Members of Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) have received numerous threats for their work. José Santos, who is in charge of human rights, alerts and accompaniment of communities at risk, has been one of the most visible members of PCN in the north of Cauca Department. Armando Caracas Carabalí has been working with communities in Suárez and Buenos Aires Municipalities, including the community of La Toma. In recent years Indigenous and Afro-descendant community members opposing the development of large-scale gold mining interests in Suárez, Buenos Aires and other municipalities in Cauca and Valle del Cauca Departments, have been the target of killings and numerous paramilitary death threats.

Name: José Santos Caicedo, Armando Caracas Carabalí and Anibal Vega  
Gender m/f: All male

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