

# URGENT ACTION

## DEFENDER THREATENED WITH EXTREME VIOLENCE

**Paramilitaries threatened to “dismember” a human rights defender and continue to threaten members of the Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero in the port city of Buenaventura, southern Colombia.**

On 18 July human rights defender **Jacob Jenezen** was threatened by paramilitaries in the La Playita neighbourhood close to the **Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero** (Espacio Humanitario de Puente Nayero) in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. The paramilitaries told him “Jacob we are going to kill you [...] we are going to cut you up and throw you into the sea” (*Jacob te vamos a matar [...] te vamos a picar y tirar al mar*). The Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero is a civilian initiative of almost 300 families designed to protect communities at risk of human rights violations and abuses.

Jacob Jenezen is a member of the human rights NGO **Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission** (Comisión Intercelesial de Justicia y Paz), which has been accompanying the Afro-descendant community of Buenaventura in their initiative to create an humanitarian space. On 3 July the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission received information that a former member of the armed forces said that he was going to force the organization to leave the Humanitarian Space. This former member of the armed forces had coordinated the demobilization of a group of paramilitaries in Buenaventura for the Ministry of Defence in recent months. Despite this supposed demobilization, paramilitary groups remain active in the city.

Many of the Afro-descendants who are living in the Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero have been repeatedly threatened in recent months, in spite of the presence of the security forces in the area. Paramilitaries have also been repeatedly entering the Humanitarian Space and threatening residents because of their attempt to create a safe place. Some residents have been forcibly displaced from the Humanitarian Space as a result of the threats and attempts of forced recruitment.

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

- Expressing concern for the safety of Jacob Jenezen and other members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission in Buenaventura as well as inhabitants of the Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero, and urging the authorities to provide effective protection for them in accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on them 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 4 SEPTEMBER 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. This is the second update of UA 104/14. Further information:

[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/020/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/020/2014/en)

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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 operating 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 Space of Puente Nayero in the Barrio La Playita was created on 13 April 2014, 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: Jacob Jenezzen (m), families of the Humanitarian Space of Puente Nayero in Buenaventura and those accompanying them  
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 104/14 Index: AMR 23/026/2014 Issue Date: 24 July 2014