

URGENT ACTION

MASS DEATH THREATS TO DEFENDERS CONTINUE

Around 100 human rights defenders received a death threat on 22 October from the Black Eagle paramilitaries in a statement sent to the New Rainbow Corporation (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris), a think tank based in Bogotá. Since September there has been an increase of repeated mass threats to human rights defenders in Colombia.

On 22 October, an envelope addressed to the director of the New Rainbow Corporation (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris), **Fernando Hernández Valencia**, was delivered to the office of the organization in Bogotá, the capital. It contained a written death threat naming around 100 human rights defenders, including peace activists and social leaders, and was signed by the paramilitary group Central Command – Black Eagles (Comando Central – Águilas Negras), who stated: “you will see and suffer a real displacement into the afterlife” (*verán y sufrirán un verdadero desplazamiento al más allá*).

Among those threatened was **José Aristizábal García**, also from the Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, who recently returned to Colombia following more than a decade in exile. He and Fernando Hernández Valencia and **Adolfo Bula**, also named in the death threat, were negotiators and signatories of a peace agreement between the government and the Socialist Renewal Current (Corriente de Renovación Socialista, CRS) in 1994. The CRS split from the guerrilla group Colombian Liberation Front (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) to negotiate a peace deal. Currently the Colombian government is in peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) in Havana, Cuba. Among those named in the death threat are victims of the conflict who travelled to Havana to provide their testimonies. In September, over 100 human rights defenders, political activists and journalists were threatened in an email by paramilitary groups.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of those threatened and urging the authorities to immediately provide effective protection for them in accordance with their wishes and needs;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- Urging the authorities to take action against paramilitary forces and break any links between them and the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 DECEMBER 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**

Attorney General

Eduardo Montealegre
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)
 Bloque C Piso 4
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax +57 1 570 2000 (when recorded
 voice answers, dial ext 2023)
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
 Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

And copies to:

NGO
 Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris
 Carrera 16 No 39-01
 Barrio Teusaquillo
 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 first update of UA 229/14. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/030/2014/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the long-running armed conflict in Colombia, human rights defenders, as well as Indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities, have endured the brunt of the conflict. All the warring parties – the security forces, either alone or in collusion with paramilitary groups, and guerrilla groups – are responsible for abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including killings, enforced disappearances or abductions, torture, forced displacement and crimes of sexual violence.

The security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled members of human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Numerous human rights defenders have been killed after being labelled guerrilla sympathizers. Guerrillas have also threatened and killed human rights defenders.

Former members of guerrilla groups who have demobilized in agreements with previous governments have also been the target of death threats and human rights abuses often committed by the security forces and paramilitaries, either acting alone or in collusion with each other. Since its demobilization in 1994 around 100 members of the Socialist Renewal Current (Corriente de Renovación Socialista, CRS) have been killed or forcibly disappeared, whilst many others were forced to leave the country in the face of threats.

According to the NGO Somos Defensores, some 30 human rights defenders were killed in the first six months of 2014, while at least 70 human rights defenders, including community, Indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders, were killed in 2013. The National Trade Union School (Escuela Nacional Sindical, ENS) reported that 27 members of trade unions were killed in 2013. Land activists and those working on impunity have been particularly vulnerable to attacks. These attacks, as well as the misuse of the legal system to bring bogus charges against human rights defenders and the theft of sensitive information from NGO offices, continue to undermine the work of human rights organizations.

The Colombian state has a protection programme which provides security to thousands of individuals at risk, including human rights defenders. However, this programme continues to suffer from serious weaknesses. For example, the effectiveness of this programme will continue to be limited as long as the perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses remain confident that they will not be brought to justice.

The Colombian government and the FARC have officially been engaged in peace talks since October 2012. In August 2014 a first delegation of 12 victims travelled to Havana, Cuba, where the negotiations are being held, to provide their testimonies.

Name: Fernando Hernández Valencia (m), José Aristizábal García (m), Adolfo Bula (m), other human rights defenders
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 229/14 Index: AMR 23/033/2014 Issue Date: 27 October 2014