

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDERS IN COLOMBIA RECEIVE DEATH THREAT

Human rights defenders from several NGOs in south-western Colombia, including organizations of Afro-descendants and Indigenous People, as well as trade unions, have received death threats. Their lives and their colleagues' lives are in danger.

On 30 October, several human rights defenders in Bogotá, as well as in Valle del Cauca, Cauca and Nariño departments in south-western Colombia, received an identical text message with a death threat from the paramilitary group Black Eagles (*Águilas Negras*). The message told them “go to Venezuela if you want a new country” (*si quieren un nuevo país bayance [sic] para Venezuela*) emphasizing that they should “leave or die” (*seban [sic] o se mueren*). The text message threatened a list of around 25 individuals and organizations, including the Black Communities Process (*Proceso de Comunidades Negras*, PCN), the Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, CRIC) and the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, CUT).

Local community leaders in Afro descendant and Indigenous communities, who have been supported by these organizations, including the Indigenous community of Cerro Tijeras the Afro descendant community of La Toma and other communities in northern Cauca, have also been threatened. The organizations and communities have opposed the development of gold mines or large-scale hydroelectric projects in the area, which inhabitants consider would undermine their livelihoods. The threat accused the organizations and individuals it named of “giving wrong information to the communities, organizing demonstrations and creating problems of law and order such as the Peoples' Congress from the 8 to 12 October” (*desinforman las comunidades sacando marchas creando problemas de orden publico como el congreso de los pueblos del 8 al 12 de oct*).

On 10 October, the Black Eagles had sent an email naming over 69 Colombian NGOs and individuals to several key human rights defenders, telling them to “assume they will be dead” (*dense por muertos*). On 13 October, **Luz Nery Ramírez Mosquera**, member of a branch of the National Association of displaced Afro Colombians (*Asociación Nacional de Afrocolombianos Desplazados*, AFRODES) in northern Colombia, one of the organizations named in this threat, survived an apparent attempt on her life by two gunmen, who she recognized as members of the security forces. She has been receiving protection measures from the Colombian Ministry of Interior, since an attack on 23 May 2009 in which she survived and her husband was killed.

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 members of PCN, CRIC and CUT; 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 the authorities 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 24 DECEMBER 2010 TO:

President

Señor Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890 (works in office hours; Colombia is GMT-5)

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

Minister of Interior and Justice

Señor Germán Vargas Lleras
Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá
Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8961

**Salutation: Dear Minister Vargas
/Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas**

And copies to:

AFRODES
Calle 17 No 1001 Piso 6, Bogotá,
Colombia

PCN

Calle 25 B #35-30, Bogotá, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Over the past year a spate of killings and death threats by paramilitaries have occurred in south-western Colombia. Afro descendant and Indigenous communities have been especially at risk. Alexander Quintero, president of the Association of the Community Action Councils of the Alto Naya region, (*Asociación de Juntas de Acción Comunal del Alto Naya*) was killed on 23 May 2010 in Cauca.

In recent months paramilitary groups, including the Black Eagles, have frequently threatened the Indigenous and Afro descendant communities of Honduras in Morales municipality and Cerro Tijeras and La Toma in Suárez municipality in Cauca department. On 14 May 2010, sixteen organizations of Afro descendants working with displaced communities were mentioned in threats issued by the Black Eagles. Several other death threats were also circulated against Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and non-governmental human rights organizations accompanying them in May 2010 (See UA 126/10, AMR 23/021/2010).

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, Cauca, Nariño and elsewhere, that they are still operating.

Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for numerous killings and threats against Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in South-western Colombia in recent years.

The People's Congress was held between 8 and 12 October in Bogotá with more than 17,000 delegates representing 220 organizations. The main themes of the Congress included the defence of their territory, their natural resources, the environment and the right to lead a life with dignity.

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