

URGENT ACTION

DEATH THREATS TO DEFENDERS AND TRADE UNIONISTS

Human rights defenders and trade unionists in Valle del Cauca Department, south-west Colombia, are in danger after receiving death threats, apparently from the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia).

On 11 April a written death threat, apparently signed by the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, was left under the door of the offices of two human rights organizations and a trade union in the city of Cali in Valle del Cauca Department: the Trade Union Confederation (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, **CUT**), the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, **CSPP**), and the Valle del Cauca branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, **MOVICE**).

The death threat was addressed to **Martha Giraldo** of MOVICE-Valle del Cauca, **José Milciades Sánchez** from the SINTRAUNICOL trade union; **Walter Agredo** from CSPP, and **Wilson Sánchez** from CUT, but named 15 individuals from CSPP, CUT, MOVICE, the trade unions **SINTRAUNICOL**, **SINTRAEMCALI**, and **SINTRAMUNICIPIO**, and the Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, **CPDH**). It also mentioned the **People's Congress** (Congreso de los Pueblos), a social movement, many of whose members have been threatened and some killed.

The death threat stated: "we are exterminating all those left-wing, activist, human rights and peace process defenders, Indigenous leaders, People's Congress activists, trade unionists, guerrilla collaborators, sons-of-bitches gonorrhoea rats, we know how you camouflage yourselves. We declare as military targets all those who disguise themselves as defenders of the workers grouped together in different trade union organizations...We also recommend that the community stays away from these people, since those that accompany them will also be shot."

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;
- Calling on them to order full and impartial investigations into these 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 them to take decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break any links these groups still have with some sectors of the security forces.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 MAY 2016 TO:

President

Juan Manuel Santos
Casa de Nariño
Calle 7, No. 6-54
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631

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

Minister of Interior

Juan Fernando Cristo
Calle 12, No. 8-38
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 283 9876

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

And copies to:

MOVICE-Valle del Cauca
Carrera 9, No. 4-53
Barrio San Antonio
Cali, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR NESTOR OSORIO, Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent SW1X 0LN, 020 7589 9177 / 020 7589 5037, Fax 020 7581 1829, egranbretana@cancilleria.gov.co, www.colombianembassy.co.uk, Salutation: Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Paramilitary groups continue to operate in Colombia despite their supposed demobilization in a government-sponsored process that began in 2005.

According to the Colombian NGO Somos Defensores (We Are Defenders), 19 human rights defenders were killed in the first three months of this year. In most of these cases the group to which the alleged perpetrator belonged is unknown. However, according to the Office in Colombia of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, paramilitary groups (which the UN refers to as “post-demobilization armed groups linked to organized crime”) continue to represent the principal public security challenge in Colombia.

Paramilitary groups continue to target human rights defenders, including Indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer leaders, trade unionists, victims’ organizations, and individuals and communities seeking to stand up for their land and territorial rights.

Name: Walter Agredo (m), Rodrigo Vargas (m), Hernán Arciniegas (m), Wilson Sáenz (m), Julián Lozano (m), José Milciades Sánchez (m), Martha Giraldo (f), Ariel Díaz (m), Edinson Méndez (m), Carlos Murcia (m), Ismael Hurtado (m), Henry Domínguez (m), Jorge Iván Vélez (m), Albert Quintero (m), Antonio Gutiérrez (m), and other members of CUT, CSPP, MOVICE, SINTRAUNICOL, SINTRAEMCALI, SINTRAMUNICIPIO, CPDH and the People’s Congress.

Gender m/f: all

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