

URGENT ACTION

DOZENS THREATENED BY PARAMILITARIES

Dozens of human rights defenders, as well as trade unionists and land restitution claimants have been threatened by the Black Eagles paramilitary group in Northern Colombia. The group has also labelled them guerrillas.

On 11 January a pamphlet from the paramilitary group Black Eagles Northern Bloc Atlantic Coast (Bloque Norte Costa Atlántica Águilas Negras) reached the homes of a trade unionist and a women human rights defender in Atlántico Department, Northern Colombia. In the pamphlet "human rights organizations, trade unionists, land claimants, victims' advisors [...] those who make human rights reports" (*organizaciones de derechos humanos sindicalistas reclamantes de tierra, asesores de victimas [...] los que hacen informes de derechos humanos [sic]*) are declared military targets. It continues "start leaving the country or hiding like rats, because we are going to finish you off one by one" (*comiencen airce [sic] del pai [sic] o a escoderce [sic] como ratas por que [sic] los vamos a cabar [sic] uno por uno*).

The death threat, which named around 40 individuals including human rights defenders, trade unionists, land claimants, as well as a state official working on land restitution and a priest, also named several human rights organizations. Those named in the death threat have been involved in the land restitution process and on issues relating to the peace process in the departments of Sucre, Bolivar, Cesar and Atlántico. Those threatened include **Juan Martínez**, one of the leaders of the El Tamarindo community, a group of peasant farmers in Atlántico Department, as well as members of the Atlántico and Sucre branches of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, **MOVICE**).

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 26 FEBRUARY 2015 TO:

President

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

Minister of Interior

Aurelio Iragorri Valencia
 Calle 12B No 8-46, Primer Piso
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 283 9876
 Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado
 Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

NGO
 MOVICE
 Calle 34 No 41-97
 Piso 3
 Barranquilla, 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.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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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 the guerrilla forces – are responsible for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of 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.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia some 40 human rights defenders were killed in the first nine months of 2014. The NGO Somos Defensores estimated that 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 20 members of trade unions were killed in the first 11 months of 2014. Land activists and those working to end 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.

Over recent years many human rights defenders and peasant farmers campaigning on land issues have been killed or threatened, mainly by paramilitary groups. Those named in the death threat include Juan Martínez, one of the leaders of the El Tamarindo community, a group of peasant farmers in Atlántico Department, who have been forcibly displaced in the course of the armed conflict and are facing illegal forced evictions from the land where they have resettled. For details see the report: *A land title is not enough: Ensuring sustainable land restitution in Colombia*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/031/2014/en>.

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.

Name: Juan Martínez (m), members of MOVICE (both)

Gender m/f: both

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