

# URGENT ACTION

## UNION LEADERS' SAFETY AT RISK

**A death threat was made against Colombian trade union leaders who are representing workers of coal mining companies in La Jagua de Ibérico municipality, in the north-eastern department of Cesar.**

On 3 March trade union president **Ricardo Machado** and treasurer **Wilder Martínez**, of the La Jagua de Ibérico Branch of the Colombian Union of Workers of the Mining, Petrochemical, Agro-Fuels and Energy Industries (*Sindicato Nacional de la Industria Minera, Petroquímica, Agrocombustible y Energética*, SINTRAMIENERGETICA) were threatened. Wilder Martínez received an anonymous text message that read "Listen you son-of-a-bitch and that Ricardo you have your days numbered for sticking your noses where they don't belong stay put or we will shut you up bastard guerrillas have you already forgotten what happened to Horcasita [sic] first and last [warning]". (*Oye HP tu y el Ricardo tienen los días contados por estar metiendo las narices donde no les interesa se queden quietos o los llamamos guerrilleros malparidos ya se les olvido [sic] lo de Horcasita [sic] primera y ultima [sic].*). Horcasita was a reference to the torture and killing of Víctor Orcasita, the Vice-President of SINTRAMIENERGETICA, by paramilitaries on 12 March 2001.

The two union leaders have been defending their union against lawsuits filed by the coal mining companies Carbones de La Jagua and Consorcio Minero Unido, both owned by multinational Glencore, regarding the legality of a strike SINTRAMIENERGETICA held between 19 July and 23 October 2012 as well as strikes held in 2011 and 2006. The union leaders had also campaigned to prevent the mining company from carrying out mining activities which they alleged would have had a negative impact on a river in the region.

Ricardo Machado had previously been threatened by an armed man on 12 February. Although the police were able to apprehend and question him, the man's identity remains unknown as he had falsely claimed to be working for the La Jagua mining project.

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

- Demanding that the authorities provide protection, as agreed with Ricardo Machado, Wilder Martínez and other members of the La Jagua de Ibérico Branch of SINTRAMIENERGETICA.
- Urge the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the threats against Ricardo Machado and Wilder Martínez, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 APRIL 2013 TO:**

#### President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos  
 Presidente de la República, Palacio de  
 Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 596 0631 (keep trying)

**Salutation: Dear President**

**Santos/Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

#### Labour Minister

Rafael Pardo Rueda  
 Ministerio de Trabajo  
 Carrera 14, No.99-33  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 489 3900 ext 2320

**Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado**

**Ministro**

#### **And copies to:**

SINTRAMINERGETICA  
 Calle 8 No 4-45  
 Jagua de Ibérico  
 Cesar  
 Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

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

**AMNESTY  
 INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During Colombia's long-running armed conflict between the left-wing guerrillas and the armed forces, which at times operate in collusion with paramilitaries, members of human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations have often been threatened, subjected to enforced disappearance or killed. 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 that they are still operating.

Colombia has one of the highest rates of killings of trade unionists of any country. Trade unionists face repeated death threats or are killed during labour disputes and during campaigns for improvement of their pay and working conditions. They have been repeatedly threatened and many have been extrajudicially executed or subjected to enforced disappearance by paramilitaries either acting alone or in collusion with the security forces. In addition, the security forces and paramilitaries often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries.

Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for killing and threatening those they accuse of collaborating with their enemies.

For many years members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA have been killed and received death threats by paramilitaries while the union has been seeking the improvement of working conditions. On 12 March 2001, the same day as Víctor Orcasita was killed, Valmore Locarno the President of the union was also killed.

Name: Ricardo Machado, Wilder Martínez  
Gender m/f: both male

UA: 66/13 Index: AMR 23/013/2013 Issue Date: 15 March 2013