

URGENT ACTION

LAND RESTITUTION PROCESS SPARKS MORE THREATS

Paramilitaries have threatened dozens of land claimants and community leaders, as well as human rights defenders, trade unionists, journalists and state officials working on land restitution in the departments of Atlántico and Magdalena in northern Colombia.

On 21 January a written death threat signed by the Atlántico and Magdalena Bloc of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia was circulated in various neighbourhoods in Santa Marta, as well as in other cities such as Cartagena and Bogotá. The pamphlet names dozens of people linked to the land restitution process: state officials, journalists, human rights defenders, community leaders and trade unionists. The pamphlet includes the names of several community leaders and the land restitution claim in which they are involved. Some human rights organizations such as the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners (Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, CSPP) and the Corporación Jurídica Yira Casto, among others, were also named. Those named in the death threat were labelled as guerrillas.

Colombian human rights organizations report that there have been constant threats against them, land restitution claimants and state officials in Magdalena and Atlántico Departments since November 2014. Investigations into the threats have not progressed. These threats come at a time when the land restitution process in Atlántico and Magdalena departments has begun processing complex cases involving claims for restitution on land occupied by multinational companies as well as by large landowners with suspected links to paramilitaries. Similar death threats were made by paramilitaries on 11 January and 18 December 2014.

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 6 MARCH 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 Agriculture and Rural

Development
 Aurelio Iragorri Valencia
 Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo
 Rural
 Avenida Jiménez No 7-1765, Piso 3

Email:
despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.co
 Bogotá, Colombia
**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado
 Sr. Ministro**

And copies to:

NGO

Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro
 Edificio Union, Oficina 507
 Carrera 10 No 15-39
 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 9/15. Further information:
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/001/2015/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 forces – 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.

Leaders of displaced communities and those seeking the return of stolen lands have been killed or threatened, especially since the Land and Victims Restitution Law was approved in June 2011 and came into force at the beginning of 2012. This law acknowledges the existence of an armed conflict in the country, and the rights of its victims. It provides for reparations for many survivors of human rights abuses, including those perpetrated by state agents. However, many other victims of the conflict will be excluded from making claims for reparation, while significant areas of stolen land might still not be returned to their rightful owners.

Several of the community leaders named in the death threat are from peasant farmer communities who are claiming the return of their land and whose cases are currently in the judicial stage of the land restitution process. For more information about the land restitution process and its obstacles, 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>.

Name: Land claimants and those working with them, including members of the Corporación Jurídica Yira Castro
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 9/15 Index: AMR 23/003/2015 Issue Date: 23 January 2015