

URGENT ACTION

THREATS FORCE HUMAN RIGHTS NGO TO CLOSE

A prominent human rights organization in Colombia has been forced to close after threats of an imminent attack.

The human rights organization Interdisciplinary Group for Human Rights (*Grupo Interdisciplinario por los Derechos Humanos*, GIDH) announced in a press release on 24 May that they were closing their office, in the city of Medellín, Antioquia Department, indefinitely due to a planned attack and threats against them and people they were working with. GIDH members have been threatened in person and by phone in recent months. GIDH believe that they are being threatened because of their work to bring to justice those responsible for a series of paramilitary massacres carried out in collusion with the security forces in Ituango Municipality, Antioquia Department, in the 1990s.

GIDH had told the government and the Office of the Attorney General in November 2012 about the threats. The authorities agreed to appoint two judicial investigators and a special prosecutor, from outside the region, to investigate the threats. They also agreed that there would be meetings in Ituango Municipality, during which the authorities would admit they had not acted on a 2006 ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) that found the state responsible for the massacres in Ituango. The authorities have not implemented either of the agreements.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of the members of the human rights organization Interdisciplinary Group for Human Rights (GIDH) and the people they are working with;
- Calling on the authorities implement the agreements made with GIDH in November 2012, which included a full and impartial investigation into a planned attack on GIDH and the threats and intimidation they have suffered, and implementation of the 2006 Inter-American Court sentence;
- Urging them to provide effective protection to those who request it, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligations to ensure human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 JULY 2013 TO:

President

Presidente 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**

Attorney General

Eduardo Montealegre
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Diagonal 22B No. 52-01 (Ciudad Salitre)
 Bloque C Piso 4
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax +57 1 570 2000 (when recorded
 voice answers, dial ext 2023)

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
 Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
 María Ángela Holguín
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
 Palacio San Carlos
 Calle 10 No. 5-51
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 381 4742

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

GIDH is a human rights NGO based in Medellín, Antioquia Department. It was set up in 2000 by a group of human rights defenders who had previously been active in the Antioquia branch of the Héctor Abad Gómez Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (*Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* - "Héctor Abad Gómez", CPDH).

The president of the Antioquia branch of CPDH "Héctor Abad Gómez", Jesús María Valle Jaramillo, was shot dead in his office in Medellín on 27 February 1998. He had previously received repeated death threats because of his human rights work. He had condemned a number of massacres committed by paramilitary groups in the department of Antioquia in the preceding months, including a paramilitary attack on his home town of Ituango in which at least 17 people were killed. He had also publicly denounced that paramilitary groups responsible for widespread human rights violations had operated in conjunction with the Colombian armed forces. Three previous presidents of the CPDH, including Dr Héctor Abad Gómez, had been killed in 1987 and 1988.

GIDH represents victims of several massacres at the Inter-American system, including victims of the massacre of "La Granja" and "El Aro", which are known as the Ituango massacres. The Inter-American Court found the Colombian state responsible for these massacres, in a July 2006 ruling. The authorities have not implemented the Court's ruling, according to GIDH.

In the course of Colombia's long running armed conflict, human rights defenders and trade unionists have been particularly likely to be threatened or killed. Most of these attacks are attributed to paramilitary groups. Guerrilla groups have also targeted human rights defenders, trade unionists and other social activists deemed to be a threat to their interests.

Name: members of GIDH

Gender m/f: male and female

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