

# URGENT ACTION

## PARAMILITARIES THREATEN TRADE UNIONISTS

**Paramilitaries have threatened scores of trade unionists, many of whom are in labour negotiations, as well as human rights defenders and other organizations in Colombia.**

The paramilitary group Rastrojo Urban Commandos (*Los Rastrojos - Comandos Urbanos*) emailed an announcement on 4 August, with death threats. They named 30 people, most of them trade unionists, and a few organizations, said they were military targets and accused them of having links to guerrilla forces. They also threatened these people's families.

Among those named are the Union of Workers of the Mining, Petrochemical, Agro-Fuels and Energy Industries (*Sindicato Nacional de la Industria Minera, Petroquímica, Agrocombustible y Energética*, **SINTRAMIENERGETICA**), the United Federation of Mining and Energy Workers (*Federación Unitaria de Trabajadores Mineros y Energéticos*, **FUNTRAENERGETICA**) and the Union of Workers of the Metal Industry (*Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria del Metal*, **SINTRAIME**).

Several of the people named are members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA and part of a union delegation negotiating with the mining company Drummond Ltd. They have been on strike for over two weeks, following failed negotiations. In recent months paramilitaries have made repeated death threats against members and leaders of SINTRAMIENERGETICA. Small-scale miners (*mineros artesanales*) had also begun a national mining strike in mid-July, which was supported by the trade unions named in the death threat.

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

- Expressing concern for the safety of all those named in the 4 August paramilitary death threat (see overleaf), and other members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA, FUNTRAENERGETICA and SINTRAIME;
- Demanding that the authorities provide protection for those at risk, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Urging them to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threat and previous attacks and threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 SEPTEMBER 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:**

#### Trade Union

SINTRAMIENERGETICA  
 Calle 34 No. 44 - 63  
 Piso 9  
 Oficina 9A  
 Barranquilla  
 Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

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 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 in the world. Trade unionists face repeated death threats or are killed during labour disputes and campaigns for improvement of their pay and working conditions. They have been repeatedly threatened and many have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance by paramilitaries acting either alone or in collusion with the security forces. 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.

Since 2000, members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA have been killed by paramilitaries, or received death threats from them while the union has been seeking the improvement of working conditions. Over recent months members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA have been the target of paramilitary death threats during labour disputes.

Among those also named in the death threat from 4 August are the human rights defenders José Humberto Torres and Iván Cepeda and the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective (*Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo*, CCAJAR).

Names: José Humberto Torres (m), Iván Cepeda (m), members of SINTRAMIENERGETICA, FUNTRAENERGETICA, SINTRAIME, Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo.

Gender m/f: both

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