

URGENT ACTION

LAND RIGHTS ACTIVISTS THREATENED IN COLOMBIA

On 20 May armed men attempted to kill the land restitution leader Enrique Cabezas near a military base in the Curvaradó River Basin, north-western Colombia. Rafael Truaquero, another land claimant, and his family were also threatened.

On 20 May a group of armed men came looking for the land restitution leader **Enrique Cabezas** in a house in which he was hiding in the hamlet of Llano Rico, Ríosucio Municipality, Chocó Department. A few minutes earlier, Enrique Cabezas, who had been followed by unidentified individuals since the afternoon, had received a death threat by telephone, in which he was warned that he would be killed that night. He managed to escape. Enrique Cabezas has been receiving repeated threats as he is among those denouncing the links between paramilitaries and security forces in the area, as well as criticizing the establishment of a military base on lands collectively owned and claimed by the Curvaradó communities. The Jungle Battalion 54 (Batallón Selva No.54), which is part of the XVII Brigade, has a military base situated in Llano Rico.

On the same day **Rafael Truaquero**, also a land claimant, received a telephone call with threats. He was told that he and his family, including his sister, the community leader **Yomaira Mendoza**, would be killed if he did not provide information about the whereabouts of Enrique Cabezas. Further threatening text messages followed on 21 and 22 May, forcing Yomaira Mendoza and Enrique Cabezas to leave the area.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Enrique Cabezas, Rafael Truaquero, Yomaira Mendoza and other members and land claimants of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin communities, and urging the authorities to provide effective protection to those who request it, according to their wishes;
- Calling on them to order a full and impartial investigation into the attempt to kill Enrique Cabezas, the threat against Rafael Truaquero and others, publish the results and bring all those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces in line with repeated United Nations human rights recommendations;
- 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 4 JULY 2014 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**

Defence Minister

Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN)
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: + 57 1 266 1003

Salutation: dear Minister/Estimado Sr.

**Ministro
 And copies to:**

NGO
 Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz
 Calle 61A, No. 17-26
 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 This is the first update of UA 50/14. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/009/2014/en>

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

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2000, collective land rights were granted by the Colombian state to the Afro-descendant communities of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins. Paramilitaries acting with the support of the armed forces subsequently forced many of the inhabitants to flee the area. Much of this land was occupied by powerful economic interests which have established African Palm plantations, cattle-ranches or other economic enterprises. Powerful mining interests are also trying to develop operations in these areas.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting efforts by Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities living in and around the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins to reclaim their lands which have been occupied by these interests. In the past few years, many of those who fled their lands following violent expulsion by paramilitaries and the security forces in the late 1990s have returned to the Afro-descendant, Indigenous and peasant farmer communities of Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó. The communities have sought to defend their land rights and prevent the expansion of illegal African palm plantations and other economic activities within their territory. Many of them have been threatened and killed as a result. Despite repeated orders by the Constitutional Court the land has not been returned to the communities.

In recent years a number of people from the Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó region who have complained about the occupation of their lands by African palm growers and other economic interests have been killed by paramilitaries, who have maintained a strong presence in the region despite the large army presence. The XVII Brigade has recently built a new military base in the area. Members of this brigade's 54 Battalion have been seen mingling with a well-known paramilitary leader in the area.

The Constitutional Court has repeatedly ordered that the lands should be returned to the community councils of Curvaradó. The Inter-American Court had issued provisional protection measures for members of the communities of Curvaradó and the neighbouring Jiguamiandó River Basin. These measures were lifted last year on the understanding that the Constitutional Court would continue the process of monitoring the implementation of the Court's order. According to information received since this ruling, the efforts taken by the Colombian authorities to guarantee the safety of the communities has been seriously inadequate.

Name: Enrique Cabezas (m), Yomaira Mendoza (f), Rafael Truaquero (m) and his family, other land restitution claimants and members of the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basin communities
Gender m/f: both

Further information UA: 50/14 Index: AMR 23/019/2014 Issue Date: 23 May 2014