

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES THREATEN INDIGENOUS LEADERS

A paramilitary group has threatened to kill Indigenous leaders in the west-central Colombian Department of Risaralda.

Three Indigenous leaders from two Indigenous reservations in Risaralda received the same text message on their mobile phones on 5 October, which read, "Member gentlemen of the leadership council, you have 5 working days to withdraw all the board because you are corrupt, otherwise we will kill your families. Sincerely, Southern Bloc" (*señores organizaciones (sic) de la junta directiva, les damos 5 día (sic) avile (sic) para que retire toda la junta porque son corrupto (sic) o sino lo matamos la familia. Atm Bloque Sur.*)

The threat came a few days after the Risaralda Indigenous Regional Council (*Consejo Regional Indígena de Risaralda*, CRIR) launched a report in which the Indigenous communities complained about the human rights abuses they have faced in the course of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict, which are committed by all parties to the conflict: paramilitary groups, the security forces and guerrilla forces. Among other human rights abuses, the Indigenous communities say they have been subjected to death threats and killings. They also say that they are being driven out of their lands by powerful people looking to exploit the area's significant mineral resources.

Since the threat, the Indigenous leaders have decided, for their own safety, to stay away from their communities.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- ✓ Calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the death threat received by Indigenous leaders in Risaralda Department on 5 October, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ✓ Urging them to take decisive action to guarantee the safety of the Indigenous communities of Risaralda Department, in line with those communities' own wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

President

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890

**Salutation: Dear President Uribe/
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe**

Minister of Interior and Justice

Sr. Fabio Valencia Cossio
Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 560 4630/599 8961

Salutation: Dear Minister/Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

Consejo Regional Indígena de Risaralda (CRIR)

Carrera 6 No 26-76, Pereira
Risaralda
Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES THREATEN INDIGENOUS LEADERS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Indigenous Peoples, as well as *campesino* (small-scale farmers) and Afro-descendant communities are among the civilian groups most affected by the internal armed conflict in Colombia. These communities often live in areas of intense military conflict, many of them on land rich in natural resources such as minerals and oil. At particular risk of attack are those communities living in areas earmarked for large-scale mineral and oil exploitation, agro-industrial developments or hydro-electric schemes.

All parties to the conflict are responsible for committing human rights abuses against these communities. Such abuses are sometimes designed to force them off their lands, which are then opened up for large-scale economic development. Those communities that campaign against such economic development, and for the defence of Indigenous rights, are also often threatened and attacked. The security forces repeatedly label these communities as "subversive." Such accusations are often followed by paramilitary attacks. Guerrilla groups also threaten and kill members of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities they accuse of siding with "the enemy."

Risaralda Department has recently seen an intensification of the conflict, and an increase of paramilitary activity.

UA: 274/09 Index: AMR 23/024/2009 Issue Date: 09 October 2009

