

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

COLOMBIA

Hollman Morris (m), journalist
His family and colleagues

Journalist Hollman Morris has received numerous threatening e-mails accusing him of being a member of a guerrilla group, and saying that he should die. He, his family and his colleagues are in danger.

In the last week of January Hollman Morris was in a remote part of the southern department of Caquetá, trying to arrange an interview with representatives of the largest guerrilla organization, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, for his investigative television programme CONTRAVIA, which he both directs and presents.

While he was carrying out his investigative work, the FARC released three police officers and a soldier they had been holding hostage since 2007. The FARC had told Hollman Morris they were preparing to release the soldier and police officers so he was able to be present when it took place, on 1 February.

A few days after the release, the authorities accused him of having links with the FARC. Referring to Hollman Morris and another Colombian journalist who was also present during the release, on 3 February President Uribe told a press conference that it was "important to distinguish between friends of terrorists who act as journalists and those who are real journalists" (*una cosa son aquellos amigos del terrorismo que fungen como periodistas y otra cosa son los periodistas*). He also said that the actions of Hollman Morris and the other journalist were "deceitful and a glorification of terrorism" (*un engaño y se convirtió simplemente en una exaltación al terrorismo*). The same day in a radio interview the Minister of Defence also said that with his actions Hollman Morris had "made a statement justifying violence" (*una apología de la violencia*). He also said that he "had a lot in common with the FARC" (*era afín a las FARC*).

Since these statements were made the CONTRAVIA e-mail address has been swamped with messages accusing Hollman Morris of being a guerrilla, and threatening him with death.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During Colombia's 40-year armed conflict, which has pitted the security forces and paramilitary groups against guerrilla groups, those accused of collaborating with one side or the other are often threatened, abducted or killed.

Journalists and human rights defenders who have campaigned for justice in cases of human rights violations committed by the security forces or paramilitary groups have often been threatened or attacked. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of the journalist Hollman Morris, his family and the people who work with him on the production of the investigative programme CONTRAVIA, using all measures deemed appropriate by those at risk;
- calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the threatening emails sent to CONTRAVIA, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;

- urging the authorities not to make unfounded accusations linking journalists, human rights defenders and trade unionists with guerrilla groups, because these threats can lead to those they accuse being threatened or killed.

APPEALS TO:

President

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 337 5890
Salutation: Dear President Uribe/Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Manuel Santos
Avenida El Dorado, Carrera 52 OFI. 217, Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN), Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 266 1003 (Ask "me da tono de fax, por favor")
Salutation: Dear Dr Santos/Estimado Dr. Santos

Vice-President

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón
Vicepresidencia, Carrera 8A No 7-27, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 565 7682 (ask: me da tono de fax por favor)
Salutation: Dear Vice-president Santos/Estimado Sr. Vicepresidente Santos

COPIES TO:

Hollman Morris's TV company
Morris Producciones
Calle 79 B No 7-60
Bogotá
Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 April 2009.