

PUBLIC

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UA 107/07      Fear for safety

COLOMBIA      Darío Edgardo Tapasco (m), indigenous leader and mayor of Riosucio municipality  
Héctor Jaime Vinasco (m), indigenous leader and governor of the Cañamono  
indigenous reservation in Riosucio municipality  
Other indigenous local councillors in Riosucio municipality, Caldas Department

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Paramilitaries have been threatening to kill indigenous leaders in a municipality in the western department of Caldas.

On 5 May, a man reportedly called the office of the mayor of Riosucio municipality, Darío Edgardo Tapasco, and asked to speak to the mayor. He said he was "Jhonatan", commander of the Cacique Pipintá Front, part of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, paramilitary organization. The civil official who answered told the man that the mayor was not available. The man replied, "Tell these sons of bitches, him and the councillors, that they have until Monday [7 May] to resign otherwise we will fill their bellies with lead." (*Dígales a esos hijueputas, él y los concejales, que tienen hasta el lunes [7 de may] para que renuncien y sino les vamos a llenar la barriga de plomo*)

On 8 May at around 7.30am four men and a woman, thought to be paramilitaries, reportedly went to the house of well-known trade unionist and indigenous leader Carlos Alberto González on the indigenous reservation of Cañamono, in the municipality of Riosucio. They questioned him about the movements of Darío Edgardo Tapasco, and about his activities as mayor of Riosucio.

In the last few days, members of a paramilitary group reportedly went into the Cañamono indigenous reservation, and told a member of the community to trick the reservation's governor, Héctor Jaime Vinasco, into coming with him to a solitary place so they could abduct him.

Paramilitaries have reportedly spread rumours in the municipality that "no more indigenous people will be allowed in the Mayor's office" (*no van a permitir más indios en la Alcaldía*).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2002 members of the Embera Chami indigenous community in Riosucio ran for office in local elections. In response, paramilitaries threatened indigenous leaders, **and later killed several**. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States urged the Colombian government to provide protection to the members of this community. Despite this, on 8 June 2003, three indigenous leaders were killed and four seriously injured, reportedly by paramilitaries, in La Herradura, Riosucio municipality..

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process. Despite this, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating with the cooperation of the security forces. It appears that many paramilitary groups have not demobilized at all, but are continuing to operate, often using new names in an attempt to cover up the fact that they have not actually demobilized. Recent public statements by paramilitary organizations have made clear that their command structures remain intact.

Amnesty International is concerned that the overall legal framework for the demobilization of illegal armed groups, including the Ley de Justicia y Paz, Justice and Peace Law, still fails to conform to international human rights standards on the right to truth, justice and reparation, and exacerbates Colombia's endemic

problem of impunity. Perpetrators of human rights violations know that they will not be brought to justice, even when there is strong evidence against them.

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

- calling on the authorities to take effective action to protect Darío Edgardo Tapasco, Héctor Jaime Vinasco and other indigenous leaders in Caldas Department, who have been threatened by paramilitary groups, as deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the death threats, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 342 0592**

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Fernando Araújo Perdomo

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 562 7822**

**Salutation: Dear Sir/Sr. Ministro**

Attorney General

Sr. Mario Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)**

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

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental human rights organization

Corporación Reiniciar

Calle 19 N° 3-10 Of. 1102

Edif. Barichara - Torre B

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 22 June 2007.