

URGENT ACTION

THREE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

Paramilitaries have threatened to kill three Colombian human rights defenders, whom they accuse of belonging to guerrilla groups.

On 31 July, a death threat signed by the paramilitary group, the Black Eagles – Eje Cafetero (*Águilas Negras – Eje Cafetero*) was emailed to three men working with human rights groups in the adjacent Departments of Risaralda and Quindío, western Colombia. The three men are **Guillermo Castaño**, president of the Risaralda branch of the Permanent Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (*Comité Permanente por la defensa de los derechos humanos*, CPDH); **Mauricio Cubides**, a member of the Domingo Taborda Human Rights Collective (*Colectivo de Derechos Humanos Domingo Taborda*), which makes documentaries on human rights issues; and **Yezid Beltrán**, director of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Early Warning System in the Eje Cafetero (*Sistema de Alertas Tempranas en el Eje Cafetero de la Defensoría del Pueblo*). The Eje Cafetero is the name given to the coffee growing region in Colombia. The Human Rights Ombudsman's Early Warning System is a government initiative aimed at preventing human rights abuses by those involved in Colombia's armed conflict.

The email names the men as being "part of the subversive and terrorist structures in Quindío" (*parte de las estructuras subversivas y terroristas en el Quindío*) and encourages supporters of the paramilitary group to "pursue them and kill them since we cannot allow the department of Quindío to become a focus for terrorist groups who, with documentaries and denunciations, want to disturb the peace of decent people" (*que se les persiga y se les de (sic.) de baja ya que no podemos permitir que el departamento de Quindío se vuelva el foco de grupos terroristas que con documentales y con denuncias quieren alterar la tranquilidad de los buenos*).

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- ✓ calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Guillermo Castaño, Mauricio Cubides, Yezid Beltrán and other members of human rights organizations working in the Departments of Risaralda and Quindío, using all measures deemed appropriate by those at risk;
- ✓ calling for full and impartial investigations into the death threat received on 31 July, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- ✓ calling for decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups and investigate and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- ✓ reminding the authorities to adhere to their obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolutions and in repeated recommendations made to them by the UN.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

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

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía
General de la Nación
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá,
Colombia

Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (extension
2017)

Salutation: Dear Attorney
General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal

AND COPIES TO:

Non-governmental organization

Comité Permanente por la Defensa de
los Derechos Humanos en Risaralda
Calle 13 # 6-39
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**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During Colombia's 40-year-old armed conflict, members of human rights organizations, trade unions and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and paramilitaries. As a result they often suffer threats, enforced disappearance or killings. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

Guillermo Castaño and other members of CPDH in Risaralda have been the target of repeated threats and attacks in the past. On 29 February 2008, Adriana González, a member of the Risaralda branch of CPDH, survived an apparent attempt on her life when gunmen fired at her house (see UA 77/08, AMR 23/010/2008, 19 March 2008). In 2002 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) ruled that the Colombian authorities should take steps to protect members of CPDH in Risaralda.

Mauricio Cubides has received a number of death threats. In early May 2009, he and a colleague were stopped by two men on a motorbike, who took away the camera and computer which they used for their documentary work.

There have also been a number of death threats against those working with the Human Rights Ombudsman's Early Warning System in Risaralda.

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