

PUBLIC

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26 August 2008

UA 234/08 Fear for Safety/Death threats

COLOMBIA Elizabeth Gómez (f),
Luz Marina Arroyabe (f),
Yimmi Jansasoy (m),
Fabio Ariza (m),
Senaída Parra (f),
Carlos Torres (m),
Andrea Abello (f),
Eduardo Mina (m),

Members of the Inter-Church Justice,
] and Peace Commission, *Comisión
Intereclesial Justicia y Paz*

Enrique Petro

] Community leader

On 25 August, a team consisting of the above members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, *Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz*, working in the Humanitarian Zone of Andalucía Caño Claro in the Curvaradó river basin, municipality of Carmen del Darien, along with community leader Enrique Petro, received a telephoned death threat stating: "with or without the army we are going to kill you", "*con militares o sin militares, los vamos a matar*".

The threat follows two telephone calls received by the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission on 24 August. The first call on the 24 August was received by the same team working in Andalucía Caño Claro and was taken from a woman claiming to be from the paramilitary group, the Black Eagles, *Águilas Negras*. She said "This is the Black Eagles speaking, It is best if you leave the area, you are being watched, you need to leave right now" "*Hablan Las Águilas Negras. Es mejor que salgan de la zona, están vigilados, deben salir ya*". The second threat, received from the same telephone number as the first, was made to the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission's office in Bogotá. The caller gave instructions to "Take these people out of the area at once" "*Sáquen ya a esos muchachos de la zona*".

Members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission have received a number of death threats from army-backed paramilitary groups. Paramilitaries continue to operate in many parts of the country in coordination with the armed forces. These paramilitary structures have assumed the name of *Águilas Negras*, Black Eagles.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, *Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz*, campaigns on behalf of civilian communities in conflict regions in Colombia, whose members have been killed, tortured or forced to flee from their homes by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Many of these communities have also been targeted by guerrilla groups.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting the cause of the Afro-descendant communities living in the Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó River Basins in the department of Chocó where paramilitaries have occupied the land of some Afro-descendent communities and have attempted to force the Afro-descendant communities to grow plantations of African Palm, a cash crop used in products ranging from cooking oil to soap.

The latest threats have occurred in the context of the efforts by the Afro-descendant communities to ensure that their collective land rights are recognized and prevent the expansion of African Palm plantations within their territory.

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 Elizabeth Gómez, Luz Marina Arroyabe, Yimmi Jansasoy, Fabio Ariza, Senaida Parra, Carlos Torres, Andrea Abello, Eduardo Mina and community leader Enrique Petro and that of other members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission;
- calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the threats and publish the results;
- request that the authorities take appropriate steps to ensure that the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, can carry out their legitimate and important work for the defence of human rights;
- reminding the authorities that their obligations to human rights defenders are laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolutions and in repeated recommendations made to them by the UN.

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 0351

Salutation: Dear Dr. Santos/Estimado Dr. Santos

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

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 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Mr Iguarán/ Estimado Sr. Fiscal

COPIES TO:

Non- governmental human rights organization

Justicia y Paz Intereclesial

Calle 61 A, No. 17-26, 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 7 October 2008.