

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONISTS RECEIVE MORE DEATH THREATS

Paramilitaries sent a new death threat to members of various trade unions in Valle del Cauca Department, southern Colombia on 7 November.

On 7 November, a flyer was left at the home of **Rafael Esquivel**, the former President of the Bugalagrande branch of the National Union of Food Industry Workers (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Sistema Agroalimentario, SINALTRAINAL*) and a former employee of Nestle. Under the heading of "AUC, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, Black Eagles, Bacrim" ("AUC, Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, Aguilas Negras, Bacrim") the paramilitaries denounced "[...] terrorist acts perpetrated in Valle del Cauca, demonstrations, marches against our democratic government and transnationals [...] organized by guerrilla groups FARC, EP, ELN show that peace does not exist and will not exist in Colombia" ("[...] actos terroristas perpetrados en el Valle del Cauca, las manifestaciones, marchas, contra nuestro gobierno democrático y transnacionales [...] dirigidas por grupos guerrilleros de la FARC, EP, ELN: son el reflejo de que paz no existe, ni existira [sic] en Colombia").

The death threat went on to say "you will have to be exterminated, you have until first December to disappear from Valle, otherwise you will see blood running on second December *** black December *** for CUT – SINALTRAINAL" ("*tendran [sic] que ser exterminados, el plazo sera [sic] hasta el primero de diciembre para que se desaparezcan del Valle, sino el dos de diciembre veran [sic] correr sangre*** diciembre negro*** para la CUT-SINALTRAINAL*"). Trade unionists **William Escobar, Álvaro Vega, Wilson Sáenz, Javier Correa, Julio López, Onofre Esquivel, Alvaro Varela, Fabio Olaya, Mauricio Gomez, Jairo Crespo** from SINALTRAINAL, the Trade Union Congress (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores, CUT*) and the Union of Municipality Workers (*Sindicato de Trabajadores del Municipio, SINTRAMUNICIPIO*) were listed as "targets to exterminate" ("*objetivo a exterminar*").

This death threat comes just days after Julio López and four other members of SINALTRAINAL were threatened.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the death threats against the trade unionists mentioned in the threat (please name) and other trade unionists under threat in Valle del Cauca, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Demanding that they provide protection for those threatened, as agreed with those in danger;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 DECEMBER 2012 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República, Palacio de
Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7–26,
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631 (keep trying)

Labour Minister

Rafael Pardo Rueda
Ministerio de Trabajo
Carrera 14, No.99–33
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 489 3900 ext 2320

And copies to:

SINALTRAINAL
Carrera 15 # 35–18
Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Dear President

Santos/Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado

Ministro

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 325/12. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/042/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trade unions, human rights organizations, and other social organizations have often been labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by government officials, as well as by the security forces and paramilitaries. Such accusations have often been followed by threats or attacks against human rights activists. Colombia is one of the countries with the highest rate of killings of trade unionists. Trade unionists face repeated death threats and killings in the context of labour disputes and improvements of socio-economic rights.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the threats against human rights organizations and trade unions, in Valle de Cauca and elsewhere, that they are still operating. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for numerous killings and threats in south-western Colombia in recent years.

SINALTRAINAL was founded in 1982 to defend and promote food workers' labour rights. Since its creation, at least 22 SINALTRAINAL members have been killed or forcibly disappeared; dozens have been victims of attacks or have received threats.

In recent years, SINALTRAINAL has been involved in a number of labour disputes, often with large multinational companies. These disputes have often coincided with reports of threats and attacks against members of the union, mainly by members of the security forces or paramilitary groups.

Luciano Enrique Romero Molina, a leader of the Cesar branch of SINALTRAINAL was killed in September 2005. His body bore more than 40 stab wounds. He had been employed by Nestlé-CICOLAC in Valledupar, Cesar Department.

Name: Rafael Esquivel (m), William Escobar (m), Álvaro Vega (m), Wilson Sáenz (m), Javier Correa (m), Julio López (m), Onofre Esquivel (m), Alvaro Varela (m), Fabio Olaya (m), Mauricio Gomez (m), Jairo Crespo (m) and other trade unionists

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 325/12 Index: AMR 23/043/2012 Issue Date: 12 November 2012