

URGENT ACTION

ORGANIZATIONS NEED PROTECTION AGAINST THREATS

On February 1, a “public statement” was issued on behalf of the “High Command of the Magdalena Medio Block” of the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, threatening the lives of members of human rights, territory, land, and environmental defense organizations in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia, including CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN. In January, another threat was issued, this time on behalf of the “Magdalena Medio Block of the FARC”, threatening the president of CREDHOS, among other human rights defenders. We call on the Colombian state institutions to provide timely and comprehensive protection to the threatened organizations.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 12.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Luis Fernando Velasco
Minister of Interior
Carrera 8 No. 7-83,
Bogotá DC, Colombia
Twitter/X: [@velascoluisf](#)

Colombian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia
1724 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20036
Email: eestadosunidos@cancilleria.gov.co

Dear Minister,

I am concerned about the security situation of human rights, territory, land, and environmental defenders in Colombia, particularly those affiliated with the organizations **Federación de Pescadores Artesanales Ambientalistas y Turísticos del Departamento de Santander – FEDEPESAN** and **Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos – CREDHOS**, located in the city of Barrancabermeja. We are deeply troubled to see that these organizations have received direct threats from armed groups operating in this region of the country, being declared a “military objective”, and stigmatized as collaborators with other criminal groups.

Amnesty International has documented the human rights defense work and the risk situation of these organizations since 2020. Despite public appeals, including both in face-to-face meetings with authorities and through actions on social and digital platforms, these individuals and communities continue to be attacked for defending their rights.

I urge you to exercise diligence in fulfilling the Ministry of the Interior's duty to coordinate actions aimed at the comprehensive protection of individuals and organizations defending human rights. This includes the implementation of the collective protection policy established in the Decree 660 of 2018, the establishment of spaces for interinstitutional coordination and collaboration with civil society, coordination with local authorities responsible for emergency response and providing effective protection routes, and collaboration with other state agencies for a comprehensive state response.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Magdalena Medio is an extensive valley between the Colombian mountain ranges crossed by Colombia's main river, the Magdalena River. Petroleum is one of the major sources of economic activity in the region. The area also engages in agro-industry, mining, livestock, among other economic activities. Due to its location and the abundance of valuable resources like oil and water, the region is considered strategic and has been the subject of continuous disputes between the State and armed groups present in the country. The Magdalena Medio has also been a stage for sustained processes of popular mobilization and human rights advocacy for decades. The combination of unions, feminist, popular movements, and human rights defense has created particularly strong scenarios of assertion and resistance. This has fostered a breeding ground for violence against human rights defenders that has persisted since at least the 1980s. In 2023, alarming figures of violence against the civilian population were recorded in the Magdalena Medio. All of this unfolds in the context of the reorganization of at least four armed groups present in the region.

The Federation of Artisanal, Environmentalist, and Tourist Fishers of the Department of Santander (FEDEPESAN) carries out its work in the San Silvestre Lake, in the vicinity of the city of Barrancabermeja. FEDEPESAN has reported water pollution by regional companies and the presence of criminal organizations engaged in drug and human trafficking. In this context, the president of FEDEPESAN, **Yuly Velázquez**, has experienced numerous forms of violence documented by Amnesty International. In February 2021, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action after serious threats against the Vice-President of FEDEPESAN by the National Liberation Army – ELN. Amnesty International has documented deficiencies in the functioning of the protection scheme provided by the state through the National Protection Unit – UNP to Yuly Velásquez.

The Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS), also based in Barrancabermeja, was founded in 1987 and has been accompanied by Amnesty International for several years. In the year 2000, the InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued precautionary measures to CREDHOS due to threats from paramilitary groups. In 2016, the Colombian Government's Victims Unit recognized CREDHOS as a subject of collective reparation for having suffered, as a collective, serious human rights violation in the context of the armed conflict.

Amnesty International has confirmed that the threats and victimization of individuals belonging to CREDHOS as a collective have persisted in recent years, in the context of the presence of armed organizations in the territory where it works. In April 2021, Amnesty International had already issued an Urgent Action asking for the protection of CREDHOS, due to serious threats suffered by its members at the time. The protection currently provided by the state is insufficient for the level of collective threat that CREDHOS has been experiencing during the last years.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 9, 2024

NAME: CREDHOS & FEDEPESAN