

# URGENT ACTION

## INVESTIGATE THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST DEFENDERS

On February 13, a grenade was thrown inside the home of a member of CREDHOS, hurting members of her family. This attack came after serious threats against civil society organizations working to defend human rights, territory, land, and the environment in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia, including CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN, during January and the beginning of February. We call on the Colombian authorities to address these threats and attacks, including by carrying out robust and effective investigations to determine who is responsible and to take the suspected perpetrators to justice, as well as to provide timely and comprehensive protection for these 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 **Second 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.

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**Director of the Special Investigation Unit**  
Attorney General's Office  
Avenida Calle 24 No. 52 – 01  
Bogotá DC, Colombia  
E-mail: hernando.toro@fiscalia.gov.co

**Colombian Embassy in the United States**  
**Ambassador Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia**  
1724 Massachusetts Ave,  
NW, Washington, DC 20036  
Email: [eeestadosunidos@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:eeestadosunidos@cancilleria.gov.co)  
Salutation: Dear Ambassador Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia

Dear Director, or Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to express my deep concern with the impunity regarding the continued threats and attacks against 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. These organizations have received direct threats from armed groups operating in this region, being declared a “military objective”, and stigmatized as collaborators with other criminal groups. We are particularly concerned by the attack against a member of CREDHOS in Barrancabermeja on February 13, 2024, when a grenade was thrown inside her home, hurting members of her family.

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 the utmost diligence in effectively fulfilling the Attorney General's Office's duty to investigate the threats and attacks against members of CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN, to establish who is responsible for ordering and carrying out these attacks, and to bring them to justice in fair trials to prevent further attacks to those who defend human rights in the Magdalena Medio region.

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 violations in the context of the armed conflict.

In April 2021, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action asking for the protection of CREDHOS due to serious threats suffered by its members. The protection currently provided by the state is insufficient for the level of collective threat that CREDHOS has been experiencing. On February 9, Amnesty International issued a first Urgent Action, asking for protection for CREDHOS. On February 14, CREDHOS denounced publicly that on the night of February 13, a women member of the organization was attacked when two persons threw and detonated a grenade inside her house, hurting members of her family.

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

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** April 30, 2024

**NAME:** CREDHOS & FEDEPESAN

**PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/7694/2024/en/>