

Open letter: Threats against HR Defenders in Colombia

Brussels, September 18, 2014

Your Excellency Baroness Catherine Ashton,
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

The assembly of the International Office for Human Rights - Action on Colombia – a network of more than 35 European organisations, is writing to you today in your capacity as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to request that you call upon the European Union to make a public reaction to the serious threats received by approximately 100 human rights defenders in Colombia last week.

On September 8, 2014 at 1.14pm a large number of organisations received via e-mail a threatening and insulting message with an attachment entitled “Black List”, in which around 100 people working for human rights and the quest for peace in Colombia were listed by name and declared as military targets. Just 24 hours later, on September 9 at 2.38pm, coinciding with “National Human Rights Day”, another email was sent with the subject line “Military objective”, from the account aguilasnegrasbloquecapital@gmail.com, which contained an extremely violent, threatening and defamatory message directed to the same group of people and adding several more names. On the same day, from the same account another mail was sent with three obituaries in the names of Virgelina Chara, Karen Borrero Prada and Ana Cecilia Prada, noting that “they died on September 18, 2014 at 11”.

The Black Eagles Capital Bloc (*Águilas Negras Bloque Capital*) is accusing these people of being guerrillas and states that they will not be allowed to continue with their “story” that they are human rights defenders. They are also given two weeks to leave the country. The pamphlet reads: “(...) now we are going to execute you (...) we know where your relatives and your children are, so get lost and leave the country to get on with its work, or we will kill you bastards one by one (...)”¹.

Among those named are several members associated with the Oidhaco network, including members of the Operating Committee, the Human Rights Observatory and the Secretariat of the Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination Group (*Coordinación Colombia, Europa, Estados Unidos - CCEEU*)². On September 16 two members of the Human Rights Observatory were also

¹ Our translation. The original reads: “(...) Ahora si los vamos a ajusticiar (...) tenemos ubicados a sus familiares a ustedes a sus hijos o se largan y dejan que el país funcione o los jodemos hijueputas vamos a matarlos uno por uno (...)”

² The Colombia-Europe-United States Coordination Group (*Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos - CCEEU*) is a coalition of 221 Colombian organisations who work on the promotion, dissemination and defence of human rights



victims of assault and theft of information as they walked from the CCEEU office to an event on victims of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

Directors of the Alliance of Social and Likeminded Organisations (*Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines*)³ are also on the list. It is also important to note that among those threatened is a member of the first delegation of victims to Havana.

In light of this serious situation, the Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights publicly condemned the threats⁴. We consider it essential that the highest authorities of the European Union make a public pronouncement on this situation. Colombia is experiencing a historic moment in terms of progress made in the negotiations underway in Havana, which aim to seek an end to the conflict. Unfortunately at the same time, threats and killings continue against community leaders, members of social organisations and human rights defenders. The European Union should publicly support human rights defenders and demand that the Colombian government implement the necessary measures to ensure their protection and the prompt investigation of the facts.

Yours sincerely



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President

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CC: Martin Schulz – President of the European Parliament, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco – President of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights

³ The Alliance of Social and Likeminded Organisations for International Cooperation for Peace and Democracy in Colombia (*Alianza de Organizaciones Sociales y Afines por una Cooperación Internacional para la Paz y la Democracia en Colombia*) is a coordination group comprised of 125 organisations, founded on the basis of the joint declaration entitled: “*La solución política y la democracia son el camino*”

⁴ “*Oficina de la ONU para los Derechos Humanos condena amenazas en contra de defensores y defensoras de derechos humanos que trabajan por la paz*”, September 9, 2014 - <http://www.hchr.org.co/publico/comunicados/2014/comunicados2014.php3?cod=15&cat=94> (Spanish only)

