

**Urgent Action Office** 3-1992 Yonge Street Toronto ON M4S 1Z7 Phone: (416) 363-9933 Fax: (416) 363-3103 [urgentaction@amnesty.ca](mailto:urgentaction@amnesty.ca)  
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## COLOMBIA ORGANISATIONS NEED PROTECTION AGAINST THREATS

On February 1, the "High Command of the Magdalena Medio Block" of the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia made a public statement. They threatened the lives of people working for human rights and environmental groups in Colombia's Magdalena Medio region. This includes groups like CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN. In January, there was another threat. This time, it came from the "Magdalena Medio Block of the FARC." They threatened the president of CREDHOS and other human rights defenders. We urge Colombian authorities to quickly and fully protect these groups and individuals who are under threat.

### **Write to the Colombia's Minister of Interior urging him to:**

- Ensure the Ministry of the Interior coordinates efforts to protect human rights defenders. This should involve precise and effective measures.
- Ensure the full implementation of protection measures by the National Protection Unit and the collective protection policy as outlined in Decree 660 of 2018.
- Establish collaborative platforms like the Territorial Guarantees Table of the Magdalena Medio, promoting partnership between institutions and civil society.
- Strengthen coordination with local governments for prompt emergency responses and to secure effective protection for those at risk.
- Work closely with other state entities, including the Ombudsman's Office and the Attorney General's Office, to deliver a unified and comprehensive response to protect human rights advocates.

### **Write to:**

Luis Fernando Velasco  
Minister of Interior  
Carrera 8 No. 7-83,  
Bogotá DC, Colombia  
X: @velascoluisf

*Salutation: Dear Minister,*

### **And copy:**

His Excellency Carlos Arturo MORALES LOPEZ  
Ambassador  
Embassy of the Republic of Colombia  
360 Albert Street, Suite 1002  
Ottawa, ON K1R 7X7  
Tel: (613) 230-3760 Fax: (613) 230-4416  
Email: [ecanada@cancilleria.gov.co](mailto:ecanada@cancilleria.gov.co)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Magdalena Medio is a key region in Colombia, stretching across a large valley and crossed by the Magdalena River. It's known for its oil industry, with the country's largest refinery in Barrancabermeja, Santander. The area also thrives on agro-industry, mining, and livestock. Its strategic importance and resource wealth have made it a battleground between the government and various armed groups. For years, it has also been a center for social activism, with human rights, feminist, and labor movements advocating for change.

This region's value has led to ongoing conflicts over control, resulting in sustained violence against human rights defenders, a trend continuing since the 1980s. By 2023, the violence escalated, with a spike in civilian attacks, amidst the presence of reorganized armed factions.

In this contentious environment, the Federation of Artisanal, Environmentalist, and Tourist Fishers of the Department of Santander (FEDEPESAN) operates near Barrancabermeja, addressing environmental concerns and the impact of criminal activities. Its president, Yuly Velázquez, has been subjected to repeated acts of violence, including threats and shootings, as documented by Amnesty International. Despite the clear risks, the state's protective measures for Velázquez have fallen short.

Similarly, the Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS), established in 1987 and based in the same city, has been actively defending human rights. It has faced threats from paramilitary groups, recognized by both the IACHR in 2000 and the Colombian Government's Victims Unit in 2016. However, Amnesty International has confirmed that the collective threat to CREDHOS members remains high, with state-provided protection proving insufficient for their safety needs.

***Please take action as soon as possible until April 9, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***