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Second UA: 12/24 Index: AMR 23/7747/2024 Colombia of February 23, 2024

COLOMBIA

INVESTIGATE THREATS AND ATTACKS AGAINST DEFENDERS

On February 13, a grenade attack targeted the home of a CREDHOS member, injuring her family. This followed threats to civil society groups in Colombia's Magdalena Medio region, including CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN, who work on human rights and environmental issues. We urge Colombian authorities to investigate these incidents, identify those responsible, bring them to justice, and protect the affected organizations.

Write to the Director of Special Investigation Unit urging him to:

- Demand thorough investigations by the Attorney General's Office into threats and attacks against CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN members, identify and prosecute the perpetrators in fair trials to safeguard human rights defenders in the Magdalena Medio region.

Write to:

Hernando Toro
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
Salutation: Dear Director,

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Magdalena Medio is a vast valley in Colombia, defined by the Magdalena River and surrounded by mountain ranges. It's an economic hub due to its petroleum industry, with the country's largest refinery located in Barrancabermeja, Santander. Besides oil, the region thrives on agro-industry, mining, and livestock. Its strategic importance, owing to rich natural resources like oil and water, has made it a conflict zone between the state and various armed groups. The region has a long history of human rights advocacy and popular mobilization, with strong coalitions formed by trade unions, feminist groups, and human rights defenders. This mix of activism and territorial disputes has led to ongoing threats and violence against human rights activists, a trend that dates back to the 1980s. In

2023, the area saw a spike in violence against civilians, particularly homicides, amidst the reorganization of at least four armed groups.

FEDEPESAN operates near Barrancabermeja, focusing on issues around San Silvestre lake. It has highlighted concerns about water pollution and the presence of criminal groups involved in drug and human trafficking. Yuly Velázquez, FEDEPESAN's president, has faced numerous threats and attacks, with incidents ranging from bullet impacts on her home to firearm attacks, one of which injured a security guard. Despite these dangers, the protection provided by the state through the National Protection Unit (UNP) has been inadequate.

CREDHOS, established in 1987 and based in Barrancabermeja, has also faced persistent threats from armed groups, leading to precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in 2000 and recognition by the Colombian Government's Victims Unit in 2016 for collective reparation. Despite these measures, CREDHOS members continue to face significant risks, underscored by a grenade attack on a member's home on February 13, highlighting the ongoing and serious nature of the threats against human rights defenders in the region.

Please take action as soon as possible until April 30, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.