

# **Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network\* Statement**

November 3, 2010

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## **Paramilitaries Threaten Afro-Colombians that Recently Advocated for Human Rights at the OAS and U.S. Congress**

On October 30, paramilitary groups that identified themselves as the ‘Capital Bloc of the Black Eagles 380,’ or *Bloque Capital de las Águilas Negras 380*, threatened several Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders, unions, politicians, press outlets, and other human rights defenders. The threat sent via text message states that “we know where you are [...] our rural and urban structures will not fail. Leave or die.”

The Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network (ACSN) strongly condemns these threats and urges Colombian authorities to immediately identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. According to a new report from Global Rights and the National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES), forty-two Afro-Colombian leaders have been assassinated since 1996; eleven of those leaders were assassinated in 2010 alone. Eight Afro-Colombian leaders have been murdered since the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) received its first of three death threats on May 14. At least three of those targeted appeared on the death threat sent to WOLA.

While ACSN appreciates Vice President Garzón’s denunciations of the latest threat received by WOLA on October 10, we are disappointed that new threats continue to arrive and expect the Colombian government to take bold action to protect those threatened. Despite domestic and international outcry, leaders who received similar threats have been assassinated and the killings continue.

We urge the Colombian government to prevent further loss of human life and act immediately to effectively ensure the protection of threatened human rights defenders.

The Colombian government must:

- Implement the protective measures outlined in Constitutional Court rulings on Afro-Colombian communities, indigenous *cabildos*, and women’s organizations (Orders 004, 005 and 092 of 2009) in consultation with Afro-Colombian community councils, indigenous *cabildos*, organizations of internally displaced people, AFRODES, the Black Communities’ Process (PCN), and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC).
- Investigate and prosecute those responsible for these threats, and promptly inform the affected organizations, Afro-Colombian community councils, and indigenous *cabildos* on the results of those investigations.
- Comply with the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (99th Session) and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (44th Session) in 2010.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Urge President Juan Manuel Santos to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the threats and to implement effective protection measures in consultation with the people, community councils, indigenous *cabildos*, and organizations listed in these threats.
- Pass House Resolution 1224: Recognizing and honoring the important work that Colombia's Constitutional Court has done on behalf of Colombia's internally displaced persons, especially indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, and women.

The U.S. Department of State should:

- Urge the Government of Colombia (GOC) to implement Constitutional Court orders 004 and 005 with particular attention to the protective measures mandated in those two orders. These must be implemented in consultation with the legitimate community councils and *cabildos*, in addition to organizations such as AFRODES, PCN, ONIC, CRIC, and ACIN.
- Request that the GOC demonstrate sufficient progress in the investigations into these threats by December 1, 2010.

The systematic targeting of Afro-Colombian leaders is part of a strategy to deprive Afro-Colombian communities of their inherent rights by forcing them into displacement or silence. ACSN rejects the use of violence and intimidation by armed groups and encourages the Colombian government to implement the aforementioned recommendations.

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\* The Afro-Colombian Solidarity Network (ACSN) includes the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), TransAfrica Forum (TAF), Global Rights, Chicago Religious Leadership Network (CRLN), Peace Brigades International (PBI), U.S. Office on Colombia (USOC), Black Communities' Process of Colombia (PCN), and activists and scholars Joseph Jordan, Roland Roebuck, Eunice Escobar and Arturo Escobar.