

URGENT ACTION

PROTECT DEFENDERS FROM ARMED GROUPS

On November 30, 2024, and again on January 2, 2025, CREDHOS confirmed that the armed group Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia – EGC (also known as Clan del Golfo or Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia – AGC) has a plan to murder CREDHOS' president, Iván Madero. CREDHOS' members, as well as other civil society organizations and communities of the Magdalena Medio region such as FEDEPESAN have been threatened and stigmatized for over a year, as part of the armed group's process of territorial, political, economic, and social control, expansion and strengthening in the region. We call on the Colombian state to guarantee the protection of the civil society organizations and communities of the Magdalena Medio region.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter to the government official(s) listed. Use the sample letter below as a guide or use your own words.
- [Click here](#) to report your action(s) on **Third UA 12.24**. We share this number with the officials we are trying to persuade.

Juan Fernando Cristo
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Colombia
Carrera 8 No. 7 - 83
Bogotá DC, Colombia
E-mail: servicioalciudadano@mininterior.gov.co
Twitter/X: [@CristoBustos](https://twitter.com/CristoBustos)

CC: Colombian Embassy in the United States
Ambassador Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo
1724 Massachusetts Ave, NW,
Washington, DC 20036
Email: eeestadosunidos@cancilleria.gov.co

Dear Mr. Minister,

I am writing to express my deep concern for the safety and security of **members of civil society organizations and communities at the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia**, particularly the Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos – **CREDHOS**, and the Federación de Pescadores Artesanales Ambientalistas y Turísticos del Departamento de Santander – **FEDEPESAN**, located in Barrancabermeja.

On October 30, 2024, written threats were publicly made against CREDHOS, under the name of the Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia (EGC). On January 1, 2025, CREDHOS received another threat following many other threats received during the last months, declaring them a “military objective”, stigmatizing them as collaborators with other armed groups and trying to force them to leave the area. CREDHOS documented that people in the rural areas of Magdalena Medio have heard about plans of the EGC to attack CREDHOS president, Iván Madero.

I urge you to exercise the utmost diligence in effectively fulfilling the Ministry of Interior's duty to implement the decrees 2078 of 2017 and 660 of 2018, in so far as they require you and other authorities to protect human rights defenders, and to guarantee the safety of organizations such as CREDHOS and FEDEPESAN, in the context of persistent threats against members of civil society organizations and communities 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, where the country's largest refinery operates in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander, at the heart of the Magdalena Medio. 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. This, coupled with the dispute for territorial, political, and economic control of the region by interest groups and armed factions, 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, especially homicides, were recorded in the Magdalena Medio. This trend continues in 2024. All of this unfolds in a context of fight between at least four armed groups present in the region, including the Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia (EGC), also known as AGC or Clan del Golfo, currently the biggest armed group of the country and with the wider regional control.

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. Amnesty International has documented deficiencies in the functioning of the protection scheme provided by the state through the National Protection Unit – UNP to Yuly Velázquez, due to her high level of risk.

The Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS), also based in Barrancabermeja, was founded in 1987 and Amnesty International has monitored its situation for several years. In 2000, the Inter-American 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.

Amnesty International has confirmed that the threats and victimization against CREDHOS' members as a collective have persisted in recent years.

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

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: April 9, 2025

NAME: CREDHOS & FEDEPESAN

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/urgent-actions/urgent-action-investigate-threats-and-attacks-against-defenders-colombia-12-24/>