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Colombia: Threat against journalists risks further undermining peace process with ELN

A death threat naming a journalist and a cameraman, received by one of them as a chat message on 8 July, will do little to move forward stalled peace talks between the government and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) if it is confirmed that the threat was indeed sent by the guerrilla group, Amnesty International said today.

The death threat, sent to the mobile phone of RCN journalist Diego D’Pablos via a chat message, and which also threatened his colleague, cameraman Carlos Melo, claimed to be from the ELN and declared both men to be “military targets”. The two men had been kidnapped by the ELN for five days at the end of May in the northern region of Catatumbo.

Such threats only serve to undermine the invaluable work of journalists in Colombia, who have long been the target of human rights abuses and violations by all the actors in Colombia’s long running armed conflict, including the security forces, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups.

The ELN must clarify whether one of its members was responsible for the death threat. It must also publicly commit to fully and immediately respecting international humanitarian law, including the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants.

The Colombian authorities must carry out a full and impartial investigation into the threat and bring all those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice, as well as take all the necessary measures deemed appropriate by the two journalists under threat to guarantee their safety.

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