

## **FECOLPER condemns FARC attack against the press in Arauca, Colombia**

9/8/2007

In the last few hours, broadcast media outlets in the department of Arauca, have received pressures from Front X of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), an illegal armed organization, to read a pamphlet about the organisation on the air or will be declared a military target. The department of Arauca, at 746 kilometres north east of Bogotá, is located on the frontier with Venezuela.

On August 7, at 11:34 am, la Voz del Cinaruco radio station received a fax signed by "Guadalupe Salcedo", Front X of the East Bloc of the FARC. In it, the organisation announced an "armed stoppage" starting at 00 hour of that same day, in the entire department of Arauca forbidding the movement of any vehicle. In the pamphlet, the guerrilla fighters demand to the directives of the radio station to have their texts read in three news programmes, during two days, with a fatal warning: "If you do not obey this order, you will be declared military targets."

The texts refer to the 17 years of death of a leader of this armed organisation, Jacobo Arenas, under the slogan "A Life Constructing a Socialist Country", and criticizes President Alvaro Uribe's democratic security policy and what they consider an infiltration in the National Liberation Army (ELN) – the other guerrilla organisation in the department, as well as the forced displacement in the rural zone, of the municipalities of Tame, Fortul and Arauquita.

Before broadcasting the information on the topic, both La Voz del Cinaruco and La Voz del Río Arauca, made it clear to the audiences the warning made by the guerrilla group. Álvaro Pérez García, director of Meridiano 70 radio station, during his opening comments confronted the FARC, disclosed his decision of not broadcasting the pamphlet text and criticized its content. It is necessary to highlight two colleagues of this radio station were murdered due to their profession: Efraín Alberto Varela Noriega (2002) and Luís Fernando Alfonso Parada (2003).

Yesterday in Saravena, during the morning hours, colleagues from Sararé Estéreo received several phone calls from a man who identified himself as a FARC spokesperson and demanded a complete reading of the pamphlets, while threatening the journalists will have to "face the consequences", in case of not doing so.

"We vehemently condemn this authoritarian attack of the guerrilla against the free exercise of journalism. When an armed group believes it has the right to frighten a journalist, it is done with reasoning that comes from arms; for journalists, reason comes exclusively from the truth and our only power, our word. We inform society while struck by deplorable work conditions, unimaginable political pressures and the action of intolerants speaking on behalf of all types of ideologies. Therefore, we declare ourselves up in words against whoever threatens us to inform by using blackmail", said Eduardo Márquez, President of the Colombian Federation of Journalists (FECOLPER). He concluded: "To the colleagues in Arauca, we assure them they are not alone: they can count on the support of our more than 1000

members throughout the country and the 600.000 members of the International Federation of Journalists in the world.”

*FECOLPER represents more than 1000 journalists in 18 departments of Colombia*

*Centre of Solidarity of the International Federation of Journalists*

*The IFJ represents more than 600.000 journalists in 114 countries.*