

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARIES KILL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

On 23 March two paramilitaries shot at Orlando Enrique Verbel Rocha, Eder Verbel Rocha and his son in San Onofre municipality in Northern Colombia. Eder Verbel Rocha was killed in the attack. Amnesty International fears for the life of his family and other MOVICE members.

On 23 March **Orlando Enrique Verbel Rocha, Eder Verbel Rocha** and his son were on their way home on a motorcycle after working in their fields in San Onofre Municipality, Sucre Department, in northern Colombia. Shortly before arriving at their home, two armed paramilitaries shot at them. They also beat them with their rifles and kicked them. Eder Verbel Rocha was fatally wounded. Orlando Verbel Rocha and the child managed to flee and inform some soldiers of the Marine Infantry (*Infantería de Marina*) that were nearby. A few hours later, the two paramilitaries who allegedly shot at the brothers and the child were detained. One of them was released after a few hours.

The Verbel Rocha family has been campaigning against impunity and for the rights of victims of impunity as part of the Sucre branch of National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas e Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE) since 2006. Guillermo Verbel Rocha, Eder Verbel Rocha's brother, was killed on 4 January 2005 by paramilitaries after denouncing links between paramilitaries and local politicians. Since then members of the Verbel Rocha family have been killed, forcibly displaced and threatened by paramilitaries.

On 26 April 2009 Francisco Verbel Díaz, who worked as a motorbike taxi driver was told that he had 24-hours to leave the region. Another taxi driver who was driving his motorbike was killed on the same day. Francisco Verbel Díaz has since left the region. On 2 May 2009 Hermes de Jesús Verbel Rocha also received a death threat and other family members have been threatened at different times. The family is also facing threats apparently in an effort to force them to leave the land they own in the area.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of Orlando Enrique Verbel Rocha and other members of his family and MOVICE and urge the authorities to guarantee their safety in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Call on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Eder Verbel Rocha and previous attacks on the Verbel Rocha family including the killing of Guillermo Verbel Rocha, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urge the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 MAY 2011 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
 Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

Minister of Interior and Justice

Señor Germán Vargas Lleras
 Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia
 Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá
 Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8961

**Salutation: Dear Minister Vargas /
 Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas**

And copies to:

Movice
 Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado
 Calle 38 No 28 A 30
 Barrio Bogotá
 Sincelejo, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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PARAMILITARIES SHOOT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 18 May 2010 Rogelio Martínez, one of the leaders of MOVICE in Sucre department was shot dead. He had been campaigning for the right to truth, justice and reparation for members of civilian communities in cases of killings, enforced disappearances and forced displacement by paramilitary forces operating in collusion with the security forces over the previous decade.

Over recent years there have been several threats and attacks against Ingrid Vergara, a leading member of the Sucre Branch of Movice. On 3 December 2010 armed men entered her home and threatened her family. On 12 October 2010 Ingrid Vergara identified a possible attempt to kill her on the Majagual square in Sincelejo. On 26 October 2009, her daughter Cendy Torres received a death threat addressed to Ingrid Vergara. On 2 April 2008, unknown men threatened to kill Cendy Torres, supposedly in reprisal for her mother's work as a human rights defender.

MOVICE is a broad coalition of civil society organizations campaigning for truth, justice and reparation for the victims of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict. The members of MOVICE have documented and exposed many cases of killings and enforced disappearance carried out by the security forces and paramilitary groups in Sucre department.

Activists campaigning for the return of lands stolen mainly by paramilitary groups over the course of the conflict have been particularly vulnerable to threats and killings in recent years. Most of these attacks are attributed to paramilitary groups. Guerrilla groups have also targeted human rights defenders and other social activists deemed to be a threat to their interests.

Despite government claims that all paramilitaries demobilized in a government-sponsored programme that began in 2003, such groups continue to operate and commit serious human rights violations against human rights defenders and other civilians. This is sometimes in collusion with the security forces, or with their consent.

UA: 94/11 Index: AMR 23/007/2011 Issue Date: 30 March 2011

