

URGENT ACTION

LAND ACTIVISTS RECEIVE DEATH THREATS

A member of the Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar – a group of victims seeking the return of misappropriated land – in northern Colombia has received death threats on behalf of both herself and other land activists.

On 11 March human rights defender **Mariluz Vásquez** – a member of the Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar (*Mesa de Víctimas del Carmen del Bolívar*) – received death threats via text message. Threats were made against herself; **Ingrid Vergara** and **Iván Cepeda** from the NGO National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE); several other members of the Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar; and the local ombudsman. Those mentioned were accused of being guerrilla fighters.

Mariluz Vásquez received another death threat via text message on 14 March. It read: "Guerrillas you have not paid attention to us, but you will not survive fourteen March ... blood in El Carmen" (*Malparidos guerrilleros no han hecho caso pero no pasaran [sic] del catorce de marzo [sic] ... sangre en El Carmen*). Like the death threat made on 11 March, this threat also named several other members of the Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar.

On 6 March members of the Victims' Roundtable of Carmen de Bolivar participated in an event in the San Isidro Labrador area in El Carmen del Bolívar municipality, Bolívar Department. The event was forced to end early due to death threats, again received by Mariluz Vásquez via text message, made against the participants and two local ombudsmen present. Over the last year many of those campaigning for land restitution, or seeking to return to their lands, have been threatened or killed.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Mariluz Vásquez and other members of the Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar (see overleaf), and Ingrid Vergara and Iván Cepeda of MOVICE, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Urging them to order full and impartial investigations into the death threats received by members of Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen de Bolívar and MOVICE, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 MAY 2013 TO:

President

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 Agriculture and Rural

Development
Juan Camilo Restrepo
Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo
Rural, Carrera 8 No.12B-31, Piso 5,
Bogotá, Colombia
Despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.c

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

And copies to:

Movice
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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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the course of Colombia's long-running armed conflict millions of hectares of land have been misappropriated, often through violence against the rightful owners, especially Indigenous People, Afro-descendent and peasant farmer communities. The various parties to the conflict – paramilitaries and the security forces, either acting alone or in collusion with each other, and guerrilla groups – have driven over five million people from their homes.

Leaders of displaced communities and those seeking the return of stolen lands have been killed or threatened, especially since the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448) was approved in June 2011 and came into force at the beginning of 2012. This law acknowledges the existence of an armed conflict in the country, and the rights of its victims. It provides for reparations for many survivors of human rights abuses, including those perpetrated by state agents. However, many other victims of the conflict will be excluded from making claims for reparation, while significant areas of stolen land might still not be returned to their rightful owners. There are not enough safeguards to ensure that people whose land is returned to them are not forced to again hand over control over their land, even to those who had driven them off it. Over the last year many of those campaigning for land restitution, or seeking to return to their lands, have been threatened or killed, and this may undermine the implementation of the law.

During the armed conflict in Colombia, which has lasted over four decades, the security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders and trade unionists they consider to be siding with their enemies.

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. Its members have documented and exposed many cases of killings and enforced disappearance carried out by the security forces and paramilitary groups in Sucre Department.

The Victims' Roundtable of El Carmen del Bolívar was founded on 17 February 2012 as a space for victims who want to demand their rights under Law 1448. Several members have been threatened since the creation of the roundtable.

Name: Mariluz Vásquez Fernández (f), Ingrid Vergara (f), Iván Cepeda (m), Marivel Vásquez Fernández (f), Gustavo Enrique Arrieta Pérez (m), Edgardo Rafael Flores Martínez (m), Ronal Yesid Castilla Vásquez (m), Robinson Castilla Cadavid (m)
Gender m/f: both