

# URGENT ACTION

## WOMEN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' LIVES IN DANGER

**On 7 May, shots were fired into the office of a women's rights organization in Bogota, Colombia. This follows a series of attacks and intimidation against human rights defender Monica Roa and her colleagues. It is believed these attacks are in retaliation for their work in favour of women's sexual and reproductive rights in Colombia. Their lives could be in danger.**

On the evening of 7 May, the power supply to the Women's Link Worldwide (WLW) was cut, and minutes later an unidentified person fired a shot into the office. **Monica Roa**, a human rights defender and Program Director of WLW, and two other colleagues were working in the office at the time. The bullet broke the security glass above Monica Roa's head. Although no one was hurt in the attack, the incident could have resulted in serious injury or death for Monica Roa and her colleagues.

Six years ago Monica Roa's leadership and the work of WLW for the respect and protection of women's human rights, in collaboration with other women's rights organizations, led to the decriminalization of abortion in exceptional circumstances in Colombia. This recent attack occurred on the eve of the sixth anniversary of this historic decision and Monica Roa and her colleagues were working on the preparation of campaigning actions on the failure to properly implement the Constitutional Court ruling.

This attack is the latest of a series of acts of intimidation against Monica Roa and WLW. Their office in Bogota has been broken into and computers stolen on three different occasions, the latest being on 23 April this year. They have also suffered several death threats and acts of harassment from 2005 onwards. For example, on several occasions human excrement has been left in front of the main door of their offices. After the first acts of intimidation against Monica Roa in 2005, the government granted her protection measures.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Expressing concern for the safety of Monica Roa and her colleagues and calling on the authorities to immediately and fully investigate the attacks against them, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urge the authorities to review Monica Roa's protection measures to make them more effective and to extend these measures to her colleagues at WLW in Bogota, according to their wishes;
- Urge them to publicly recognize that the work of human rights defenders working on sexual and reproductive rights issues is legitimate, and remind them of their obligations regarding the situation of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and
- Reminding them of the urgent need to effectively implement the decision of the Constitutional Court on the decriminalization of abortion and to fulfil their obligations regarding the protection of women and girl's human rights.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JUNE 2012 TO:**

#### President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos  
 Presidente de la República,  
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,  
 Bogotá D.C. – Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 3375890

**Salutation:** Señor Presidente

#### Attorney General

Sr. Eduardo Montealegre Lynett  
 Fiscal General de la Nación  
 Dg. 22B No. 52-01 Edf. C Piso 5  
 Bogotá D.C. - Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 4149000 ext. 2396

**Salutation:** Señor Fiscal General

#### **And copies to:**

Women's Link Worldwide  
 Apartado Postal 359261  
 Oficina Rosales  
 Bogotá D.C.  
 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 2006 the Constitutional Court of Colombia lifted the total ban on abortion by allowing women and girls legal access to abortion services in three exceptional circumstances, including when the life of the woman or girl is at risk if she continues with the pregnancy or she is a victim of rape (decision C-355/2006). However, the implementation of the decision has faced several obstacles and it has not been implemented.

On several occasions, the Procurator General has publicly advocated for the re-establishment of the total ban on abortion. He has publicly challenged the Constitutional Court ruling, and has attempted to obstruct its implementation by issuing information which contradicts the 2006 decision to decriminalise abortion in certain exceptional circumstances. Since the Procurator Delegate for the Defence of Infancy, Adolescence and Family Rights took office, she has also openly supported the stance of the Procurator General on this same issue and has publicly declared that she is in favour of criminalising abortion in all circumstances. This Procurator Delegate is responsible for issues relating to women's rights within the Procurator General's office.

The delay in implementing the Constitutional Court ruling has serious consequences on women and girls' lives and health. As a result, 1201 women decided to file a demand through the judicial system (*tutela*), to require that the Procurator General and the Procurator Delegate for the Defence of Infancy, Adolescence and Family Rights retract their declarations and respect the Constitutional Court ruling of 2006. The women also requested that the Procurator General's office issue new and complete information on sexual and reproductive rights consistent with the ruling. Monica Roa and WLW were key actors in this process.

Recently, Monica Roa found out through media reports that the Procurator Delegate for the Defence of Infancy, Adolescence and Family Rights had filed a criminal complaint against her. Monica Roa has not formally been given any details of any case against her, but from the media reports she understands that she may have been accused of slander and defamation.

Name: Monica Roa (female) and colleagues

Gender m/f: All female, except for one male

UA: 133/12 Index: AMR 23/020/2012 Issue Date: 11 May 2012