

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND PROTECTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

On 14 June, Franklin Torres, Candelaria Barrios and Pedro Geney, members of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) in Sucre Department, northern Colombia, received a death threat by email.

The email was also sent to MOVICE staff in Bogotá, who are in charge of the security and protection of MOVICE members. The email said: "We warned you... today you have to accept the consequences... our campaign, be patriotic kill a guerrilla, continues... We did not want more blood, but you force us... Candelaria Barrios Acosta, Pedro Geney Arrieta, Franklin Torres, guerrillas disguised as human rights defenders, the order has been given to kill you" (*Se los advertimos.. hoy se tendran[sic] que acoger a las consecuencias... nuestra campaña haga patria mate a un guerrillero continua no queremos[sic] mas sangre pero nos obligan... Candelaria Barrios Acosta Pedro Geney Arrieta Franklin Torres guerrilleros, disfrazados de defensores de derechos humanos esta dada la orden de darles la baja*).

This follows a previous email on 10 June to **Ingrid Vergara, Pedro Geney** and **Franklin Torres** telling them that they would be executed if they did not leave the area by 14 June.

Candelaria Barrios received a death threat on her mobile phone on 20 May. She is the sister of Jesús Barrios Acosta, who was killed by paramilitaries on 15 November 2006. The threat read: "I warn you that I heard that there is a plan to kill you and your nephew; there is a 20 million bounty. Leave" (*Le aviso escuche un plan para matar a los que hablan tu y tu sobrino hay 20 millones para hacer la vuelta vayanse [sic]*)

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Franklin Torres, Candelaria Barrios, Pedro Geney, Ingrid Vergara and other members of MOVICE and urging the authorities to guarantee their safety in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into all threats including previous death threats against members of MOVICE, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligations regarding the situation of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- 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 29 JULY 2011 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República,
Palacio de Naríño,
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
Sincedejo, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 150/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/017/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 19 May, Franklín Torres, Ingrid Vergara and Pedro Geney received an email containing a death threat. Ingrid Vergara, Candelaria Barrios, Franklín Torres and Pedro Geney are members of MOVICE in Sincelejo, Sucre department, which has been campaigning for the return of lands stolen by paramilitary groups, often in collusion with the security forces, mainly in the Montes de María area.

This work has included campaigning for the restitution of the “La Europa” farm situated in the municipality of Ovejas, Sucre Department. In the course of campaigning for land restitution, members of MOVICE have been threatened and killed, including Eder Verbel Rocha, who was killed by paramilitaries on 23 March 2011. On 17 May, the dog of the Verbel family was poisoned and a relative of one of the alleged killers of Eder Verbel Rocha said that they were going to poison the family.

On 18 May 2010 Rogelio Martínez, also a member of MOVICE, and leader of a community of peasant farmers, was killed close to the farm “La Alemania” in San Onofre Municipality. The farm was stolen by paramilitaries following the killing and forced displacement of its owners. His killing appears to be related to efforts to stop campaigning against impunity and efforts to block the restitution of land.

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 organization has 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 operating alone or in collusion with the armed forces 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 were 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.

During Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict, the security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled human rights organizations and community leaders 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.

Further information on UA: 150/11 Index: AMR 23/021/2011 Issue Date: 17 June 2011

