

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS THREATENED

Members of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) and other non-governmental human rights organizations in Northern Colombia have received emailed death threats signed by paramilitaries.

On 9 December members of MOVICE Sucre branch, received an email containing a death threat signed by the Black Eagles paramilitaries. The email reads "it seems like the death of your comrades Rogelio Martinez, Eder Verbel and the jailing of **Carmelo Agámez** is not enough...you members of MOVICE are rats which have to be exterminated...we are going to kill your ring leaders in Sucre...**Ingrid Vergara** and **Juan David Diaz**, followed by **Adolfo Verbel, Verónica Montaña, Adil Melendres, Jorge Velásquez, Malena Martínez, Candelaria Barrios**". **Iván Cepeda**, former leader of MOVICE, and now Colombian Congress member is also mentioned.

On the same day a death threat signed by a paramilitary group calling itself "Group for a Barranquilla clear of guerrillas" (*Grupo para una barranquilla limpia de guerrilleros*) was sent to MOVICE and other human rights NGOs in Barranquilla, department of Atlántico. The death threat listed the names of human rights defenders working for MOVICE-Atlántico Branch, Happy Childhood Foundation (*Fundación Infancia Feliz*), Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners- Atlántico Branch (*Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con Presos Políticos- seccional Atlántico*, FCSPP), Association of Families united by a Single Pain, (*Asociación de Familias Unidas por Un Sólo Dolor*, AFUSODO) and the Permanent Human Rights Committee, (*Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos seccional Atlántico*, CPDH).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of members of MOVICE –Sucre and Atlántico branches including those named above as well as Iván Cepeda and the other human rights NGOs named above in Barranquilla 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 these death threats and previous threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Remind 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 28 JANUARY 2012 TO:

President

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

Fax: +57 1 596 0631 (keep trying)

Salutation: Dear President Santos/

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos

Director of the National Protection Unit of the Ministry of Interior

Sr. Andrés Villamizar
Unidad Nacional de Protección
Ministerio del Interior
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10,
Bogotá, Colombia

andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co

Salutation: Dear Mr Villamizar

/Estimado Sr. Villamizar

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 insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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 throughout Colombia.

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. The threats against MOVICE Sucre branch come less than two weeks after a Constitutional Court ruling in favour of the peasant farmers of La Alemania, who have been campaigning for the return of their land after their forcible displacement by paramilitaries with the support of MOVICE. The ruling represents an important step towards securing the restitution of their lands. The death threat appears to make a reference to the ruling and tells MOVICE not to consider it to be a triumph.

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.

Name: Carmelo Agámez, Ingrid Vergara, Juan David Diaz, Adolfo Verbel, Verónica Montaña, Adil Melendres, Jorge Velásquez, Malena Martínez, Candelaria Barrios, Iván Cepeda

Gender m/f: Carmelo Agámez (m), Ingrid Vergara (f), Juan David Díaz (m), Adolfo Verbel (m), Verónica Montaña (f), Adil Melendres (m), Jorge Velásquez (m), Malena Martínez (f), Candelaria Barrios (f), Iván Cepeda (m)