

URGENT ACTION

FURTHER THREAT TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

A gunman has intimidated a woman (name known to Amnesty International) who has worked with human rights activist Ingrid Vergara, in the city of Sincelejo in northern Colombia. Both women are in danger, as are other members of the organization Ingrid Vergara works for.

Two men on a motorcycle followed the woman on 5 February at around 8.15pm, while she was being carried by a motorcycle taxi in Sincelejo, the capital of Sucre department. When the men caught up with the motorcycle taxi, one of them drew a gun and aimed it at the woman for a few seconds before riding off.

Ingrid Vergara is the spokesperson of the Sucre branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas e Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE). The woman threatened on 5 February is a social worker and MOVICE supporter. She and Ingrid Vergara had spent most of 4 and 5 February together at meetings, where they discussed recent paramilitary activity in Sucre, with colleagues and partners. On 4 February, they and other MOVICE members had delivered a letter to the governor of Sucre in which they accused him of having links with a paramilitary group.

Ingrid Vergara has been subjected to repeated intimidation and death threats over the last few years. On 26 October 2009, a death threat addressed to her was given to her 14-year-old daughter, Cendy Torres. Men had told Cendy Torres on 2 April 2008 that they were going to kill her because of what her mother was doing.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Ingrid Vergara and those who have worked with her at the MOVICE branch in Sucre department, and urging the authorities to provide them with effective protection in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the 5 February act of intimidation and previous death threats against Ingrid Vergara, her daughter Cendy Torres and her colleagues, 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.
- Urging them 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 26 MARCH 2010 TO:

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fabio Valencia Cossio
Ministerio Del Interior y de Justicia
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10,
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 599 8013

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Sr. Ministro

Acting Attorney General

Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Fiscal General de la Nación (e)
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C
Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (dial extension
2017 on hearing the welcome message)**
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Jaime Bermúdez
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San
Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 381 47 21
**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

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 301/09. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/027/2009/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ingrid Vergara and her colleagues in MOVICE have documented and exposed many cases of extrajudicial execution and enforced disappearance carried out by paramilitary groups in Sucre department. 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 Colombian government has implemented some protection measures for Ingrid Vergara and Cendy Torres, but Ingrid Vergara has argued that they are inadequate. The authorities have not told Ingrid Vergara or her colleagues of any advances in the investigation into previous death threats and acts of intimidation.

Colombian human rights defenders and their families are in constant danger of being abducted or killed because of their work. People closely involved with high-profile criminal investigations into human rights abuses, including witnesses, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, have also been threatened or killed.

Over the last few years there has been a worrying increase in the use of death threats against human rights defenders, attributed mostly to paramilitary groups. Despite government claims that all paramilitaries demobilized in a government-sponsored programme that began in 2003, such groups continue to operate – sometimes in collusion with or with the consent of the security forces – and to commit serious human rights violations against human rights defenders and other civilians.

Further information on UA: 301/09 Index: AMR 23/007/2010 Issue Date: 12 February 2010

