

PUBLIC

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Fear for Safety

22 June 2006

COLOMBIA

Gloria Amparo SUÁREZ (f)
Other members of *Organización Femenina Popular*, (OFP), Popular Women's
Organization

Gloria Amparo Suárez, a member of the non-governmental human rights organization *Organización Femenina Popular*, (OFP), Popular Women's Organization, has reportedly been threatened by army-backed paramilitary groups operating in Barrancabermeja, department of Santander. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for her safety.

On 12 June 2006 at about 3:00pm, an unidentified man reportedly approached Gloria Amparo Suárez's husband and said to him: "*Dígale a su mujer que tiene un mes de plazo para irse de Barrancabermeja o sino la lleva, y no digan nada, ni denuncien, ni hagan escándalo porque sino el muerto será usted*" "Tell your wife that she has a month to leave Barrancabermeja or if not she will be taken, don't say anything, don't denounce, don't make a scandal or else you will be the dead person".

Gloria Amparo Suárez has been a member of the OFP for 15 years and is a leader of the organization. In recent years the OFP has repeatedly been threatened by army-backed paramilitary groups that operate in the area as a result of the human rights work the organization undertakes.

The latest threat follows the appearance of a written death threat which has reportedly been circulating in Barrancabermeja (commonly abbreviated to Barranca) since 5 June 2006. The threat says:

"La revolución sólo debe estar en los libros de historia no en las calles del país. Del 1 al 15 de junio limpieza de sapos revolucionarios: (Movimientos, asociaciones, corporaciones, sindicatos, organizaciones) así que vayan alistando 2 cajones 1 para la lengua y otro para usted. Muerte a sapos hijueputas de barranca, guerrilleros malparidos. Grupos organizados de limpieza social por una Barranca limpia de guerrilleros".

"The revolution should only be in the pages of history books not in the streets of the country. From 1 to 15 June cleansing of revolutionary informers: (Movements, associations, corporations, trade unions, organizations) so start getting ready 2 boxes 1 for the tongue and the other for yourself. Death to son-of-bitch informers in Barranca, bastard guerrillas. Organized social cleansing groups for a Barranca clean of guerrillas".

This threat followed an emailed death threat sent to several human rights organizations, including the OFP, from a group calling itself *Colombia Libre de Comunistas*, Colombia Free of Communists. "*Colombia Libre*" is the name given by the paramilitary umbrella organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, on its website.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have officially been demobilising, in a government-sponsored process that was supposed to be completed this year. Despite this, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating in coordination with the security forces. It appears that many paramilitary groups have not demobilized at all, but are continuing to operate under new names.

Human rights organizations are frequently labelled as guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. As a result they often suffer "disappearance", killings or torture at the

hands of army-backed paramilitary groups, or members of the security forces. Armed opposition groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders they consider to be siding with the enemy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern at the death threat against Gloria Amparo Suárez on 12 June 2006, and at the recent threats made against other human rights and social activists, which were allegedly made by army-backed paramilitary groups;
- expressing concern for the safety of Gloria Amparo, her family and other OFP activists;
- urging the authorities to take effective action, deemed appropriate by Gloria Amparo, her family and other OFP members, to protect them and ensure that OFP can continue its legitimate and important work in the defence of human rights in safety;
- calling on the government to investigate all threats against human rights defenders and to bring those responsible to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice, in line with the human rights recommendations of the United Nations (UN);
- calling on the authorities to produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and to make these plans public.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe/ Dear President Uribe

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega, Ministro del Interior y de Justicia, Ministerio del Interior, Av. Jiménez No 8-89, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 560 4630

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Iguarán, Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación, Diagonal 22B 52-01, Edificio C Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 414 9108

Salutation: Dear Dr Iguarán / Estimado Dr. Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Human Rights NGO

Organización Femenina Popular, Cra 22 No 52B – 36, Barrancabermeja, Santander, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 August 2006.