

CAMPAIGNING FOR TRUTH AND JUSTICE IN COLOMBIA

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT OF
VICTIMS OF STATE CRIMES

HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN COLOMBIA HAVE BEEN FIGHTING TO END IMPUNITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR DECADES. MANY OF THOSE DEMANDING JUSTICE CONTINUE TO BE THREATENED AND ATTACKED IN AN EFFORT TO SILENCE THEM AND PROTECT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES.



The National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE) is a coalition of more than 200 non-governmental human rights and social organizations. Formed in 2004, MOVICE campaigns for truth, justice and reparation for the tens of thousands of victims of human rights violations, such as extrajudicial execution

Ten years after the adoption of the UN Declaration on **Human Rights Defenders** (Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms), they continue to face restrictions on their work, harassment, intimidation and abuse. Yet despite the risks and challenges, human rights defenders continue to make a real difference to the lives of individuals around the world.

Human rights defenders strive to close the gap between the promise of justice and equality in dignity and rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the reality of continuing human rights abuses today. Their work is vital for the realization of human rights for all.

and disappearance, committed by the security forces and their paramilitary allies during Colombia's ongoing armed conflict.

The work of MOVICE has been instrumental in publicly exposing the failure of the Justice and Peace process, including the legal framework set up to regulate the demobilization of paramilitary groups. This legal framework has been heavily criticized by national and international human rights organizations as well as by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), because it does not comply with international standards on the right of victims to truth, justice and reparation and because it exacerbates Colombia's endemic problem of impunity.

THREATS AND ATTACKS

Members of MOVICE have been subjected to widespread and persistent threats, which have intensified in 2008. At least eight members of organizations belonging to MOVICE have been killed since 2004.

On 6 March 2008, MOVICE organized a series of mass demonstrations in 24 cities in Colombia and in 60 other countries, condemning human rights violations by paramilitaries and the security forces. A number of trade unionists and human rights defenders who were closely involved in organizing these events were killed or threatened just before or soon after 6 March.

For example, Adriana González, a member of the Permanent Committee of Human Rights (Comisión Permanente por los Derechos Humanos, CPDH), which is affiliated to MOVICE, and organizer of the 6 March demonstration in Pereira, Risaralda department, survived an attempt on her life when gunmen fired on her house on 29 February.

On 11 March a number of organizations, many of which participated in the 6 March demonstrations, received a death threat via email, purportedly from the paramilitary group Metropolitan Front of the Black Eagles in Bogotá (Aguilas Negras – Bloque Metropolitano de Bogotá). The threat



The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998. The term “human rights defender” is used to describe people who act in many different ways and in different capacities to protect and promote human rights.

Some defenders work against particular abuses, such as torture or forced eviction. Others work for the rights of specific groups or sectors of the population facing discrimination and disadvantage, such as Indigenous People, ethnic or religious minorities, rural women, street children, or lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

For all their diversity, human rights defenders whoever they are and whatever they do have several characteristics in common. They all uphold the fundamental principle of universality – that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or any other status. All are committed to respecting the rights and freedoms of others in their own actions.

accused the organizations of being “guerrillas” and named them as “military targets”. The email said: “You used the march on 6 March this year to bring us down further and turn people against us, we will begin to kill you one by one, we mean business, and we won’t leave any loose ends...” The threat included photographs taken of one of the marches and listed the names of 28 people – many of them members of human rights, Indigenous and other organizations which participated in the march – that they said they planned to abduct.

On 2 April 2008, the 12-year-old daughter of Ingrid Vergara, a leading member of MOVICE who had co-ordinated the 6 March demonstration in Sucre department, was approached outside her school by four unknown men who threatened: “we are going to kill you because of what your mother is doing”. This and similar incidents took place after the President’s special adviser, José Obdulio Gaviria, tried to allege that the 6 March demonstrations were organized by the guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

(Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC).

Iván Cepeda, a leading member of MOVICE and one of the main organizers of the 6 March demonstrations, received email death threats before and after the march. In June 2008, Iván Cepeda

Above: A display of bricks bearing the names of victims of the long-running internal conflict, Bolívar Square, Bogotá, 9 April 2008.

Cover image: A map of Colombia covered with the pictures of those missing or killed in the conflict. Bolívar Square, Bogotá, 12 September 2007.



Article 1, UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

9 DECEMBER 2008 MARKS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS. IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEGITIMATE WORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND TAKE ACTION TO SUPPORT AND PROTECT THEM



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received information that members of the intelligence services had placed him under surveillance and intended to kill him. He filed a complaint with the Office of the Attorney General the same month, but to date Amnesty International is not aware of any investigation being carried out.

Since June 2006, Iván Cepeda has been the subject of precautionary protective measures of the IACHR and government protection measures. In November 2006, the IACHR made a further call to provide security measures for 17 members of the Sucre branch of MOVICE.

Other members of MOVICE's branch in Sucre department have also been threatened and members in other parts of the country have been attacked. On 5 July 2008, John Fredy Correa Falla, a member of MOVICE and the CPDH in Caldas department, was shot dead by four gunmen on motorbikes.

TAKE ACTION NOW

PLEASE WRITE TO THE COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES:

- Highlighting the important contribution made by members of MOVICE in campaigning against impunity and upholding the right to truth, justice and reparation for victims of gross human rights violations;
- Expressing serious concern for the safety of members of MOVICE and urging the authorities to take effective measures to protect them, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Expressing serious concern about the public statements made by government officials which label human rights defenders and activists as "subversive" and calling on the authorities to stop making these statements;
- Calling for immediate, thorough and effective investigations into the killings, threats, attacks and acts of harassment against members of MOVICE, and for all those responsible to be brought to justice promptly;
- Reminding them of their obligation – set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders – to recognize the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and defenders' right to carry out their activities without obstacles or fear of reprisals.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia
Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2
Bogotá
Colombia
Fax: +57 1 337 5890
Salutation: Dear President Uribe/
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Attorney General
Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4
Bogotá
Colombia
Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)
Salutation: Dear Mr Iguarán/
Estimado Sr. Fiscal

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion – funded mainly by our membership and public donations.

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