

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/055/2002

UA 144/02

Fear for

COLOMBIA Yolanda Becerra (f), President of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization in Barrancabermeja, Santander department

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Yolanda Becerra, President of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization. The paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia is reportedly planning to kill her.

Members of the *Unión Sindical Obrera*, (USO), Oil worker's Union, have been informed by credible sources of a plot to kill Yolanda Becerra. The OFP and the local police have reportedly received similar information from other sources. Yolanda Becerra has been threatened in the past (See Further information UA 22/01, AMR 23/087/2001, 7 September 2001 and follow ups) and may have been targeted because her organisation continues to denounce human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups, as they attempt to take control of the region.

Concerns for Yolanda Becerra's safety are heightened by the killing of Diofanol Sierra Vargas, leader of the food workers' union (SINTRAINAL) and OFP associate, who was shot outside his house by paramilitaries on 8 April. (See UA 111/02, AMR 23/039/2002, 11 April 2002).

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

- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Yolanda Becerra, President of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), so she can continue her legitimate work for the defence and promotion of human rights;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the reported threats to kill Yolanda and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in United Nation and Organization of American States declarations, and in line with the UN's repeated recommendations that they should take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite their own commitments and UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Santander, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior
Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior,
Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 5298/ 562 9890 (these numbers may be difficult to get through to, but please keep trying)

Salutation: Dear Minister Estrada Villa / Sr. Ministro Estrada Villa

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Oficina 217, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister Bell / Sr. Ministro Bell

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Jorge Eliecer Gómez Villamizar, Gobernador del Departamento de Santander,
Gobernación de Santander,

Calle 37, No. 10-30,

Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Telegram: Gobernador Santander, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 339889

Salutation: Dear Governor Gómez Villamizar / Sr. Gobernador Gómez Villamizar

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana / Dear President Pastrana

COPIES 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 24 June 2002.