

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/127/2001

19 December 2001

Further information on UA 22/01 (AMR 23/008/01, 29 January 2001) and follow-up (AMR 23/028/2001, 8 March; AMR 23/035/2001, 26 March; AMR 23/061/2001, 8 June; AMR 23/087/2001, 7 September; AMR 23/113/2001, 12 November; AMR 23/117/01, 20 November) - Fear for Safety

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

Yolanda Becerra has reportedly received death threats from unidentified callers believed to have links with paramilitary groups. Amnesty International fears for her safety and that of other human rights activists working with the *Oganización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization.

On 17 December an unidentified woman caller reportedly telephoned the offices of another human rights organization with headquarters in Barrancabermeja, CREDHOS, asking when Yolanda Becerra's funeral would be held, a typical form of paramilitary threat. Later that day a man reportedly called the OFP's offices asking "if they knew about Yolanda" ("*si sabían lo de Yolanda.*") When the woman who answered the call asked him what he was referring to, he replied, "the assassination of Yolanda Becerra" ("*al asesinato de Yolanda Becerra.*"). He then reportedly asked if Yolanda was in the office.

The OFP have reportedly since made a public statement, calling on the government to ensure her safety and that of other OFP activists in the Magdalena Medio region. They believe that the safety of OFP members is the responsibility of Colombian local and national civil, military and police authorities.

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

- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Yolanda Becerra, President of the *Organización Femenina Popular*, 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 threats against her, 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

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministerio 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, 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 20 71

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana / Dear President Pastrana

COPIES TO:

Women's grassroots organization

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 30 January 2002.