

PUBLIC

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15 May 2003

**Further Information on UA 124/02 (AMR 53/004/2002, 23 April 2002) Death Threats/Fear for Safety**

**VENEZUELA Lilibiana Ortega (f) - President of *Comité de Familiares de Víctimas del 27 de Febrero (COFAVIC)*, Committee of the Relatives of the Victims of 27 February  
Other members of COFAVIC**

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There are renewed concerns for the safety of Lilibiana Ortega, President of the *Comité de Familiares de Víctimas del 27 de Febrero (COFAVIC)*, Committee of the Relatives of the Victims of 27 February and for other members of the human rights organization after they received further anonymous threats.

Between the first week of April 2003 and mid-May 2003, a series of e-mails were sent to the COFAVIC office address calling Lilibiana Ortega a "traitor to the country and to the revolution" (*'traidora a la patria y a la revolución'*). The messages also stated that if COFAVIC did not stop its work, including on police extrajudicial executions in the state of Falcón, "it could bring about serious consequences both for Lilibiana Ortega and for the organization (*'le puede costar muy caro, por su bien y el de su organización'*).

On 18 April 2002, similar threatening emails were sent to Lilibiana Ortega and to COFAVIC, and the organization received an anonymous phone call in which the caller said "Tell the doctor if she steps out of line...blood will run" (*'Digale a la Doctora (Ortega) que no se aparte del camino,..[o] sangre va correr'*) (see original UA). The following day, the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issued protection measures on behalf of Lilibiana Ortega and other members of COFAVIC, requiring the Venezuelan authorities to take steps to guarantee their safety. Police protection was provided to those at risk. However, the recent series of threats shows that the action that has been taken is not sufficient to prevent future threats, or to identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Between 11 and 13 April 2002, President Hugo Chávez was briefly overthrown by a section of the military, following an anti-government demonstration in the capital Caracas. During the 48 hours of political turmoil, at least 45 people were killed and over 100 were wounded. By 13 April protests led to the return to power of the constitutionally elected President and his government.

COFAVIC and other human rights organizations have documented the many human rights violations which occurred during the three day period. Along with other national and international human rights organizations, COFAVIC have publicly called for independent and impartial investigations to be carried out, in order to clarify who was responsible for the violence at all levels and to bring them to justice. COFAVIC have also taken a leading role in denouncing extrajudicial executions by police in Falcón and other states, and presented these cases to the IACHR, which has issued protection measures for witnesses in the case of Falcón and similar cases.

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

- expressing concern at the renewed threats against Lilibiana Ortega and other members of COFAVIC;
- calling on the authorities to take more effective steps, in accordance with the wishes of those at risk, to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation of the threats against COFAVIC, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that the UN *Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties*

recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders and their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Hugo Chávez Frías  
Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela  
Palacio de Miraflores  
Esquina de Bolero, Av. Urdaneta  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegram:** **Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Fax:** **+ 58 212 806 3233**

**Salutation:** **Señor Presidente/ Dear President**

Minister of the Interior and Justice

General Lucas Rincón Romero  
Ministro del Interior y Justicia  
Ministerio del Interior y Justicia  
Avenida Urdaneta Esquina de Platanal  
Edificio Interior y Justicia  
Despacho del Ministro, piso tres  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegram:** **Ministro del Interior y Justicia, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Fax:** **+ 58 212 506 1557/1558**

**Salutation:** **Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister**

Attorney General

Dr. Isaías Rodríguez  
Fiscal General de la República,  
Avenida Universidad  
Esquina Pele el ojo a Misericordia  
Frente a Parque Carabobo  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegram:** **Fiscal general de la República, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Fax:** **+ 58 212 576 4419**

**Salutation:** **Estimado Dr Rodríguez/ Dear Dr Rodríguez**

Human Rights Ombudsman

Defensoría del Pueblo  
Dr. Germán Mundaraín  
Bellas Artes comienzo Avenida México frente al Ateneo de Caracas,  
Plaza Morelos  
Caracas, Venezuela

**Telegram:** **Defensoría del Pueblo, Caracas, Venezuela**

**Fax:** **+ 58 212 575 4467 (If a voice answers, say "Por favor, me puede dar tono de fax")**

**Email:** **gmundarain@defensoria.gov.ve**

**Salutation:** **Estimado Dr Mundaraín/ Dear Dr Mundaraín**

**COPIES TO:**

Committee of the Relatives of the Victims of 27 February

COFAVIC,  
Apdo Postal 16150  
La Candelaria  
Caracas 1010-A, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 June 2003.