

URGENT ACTION

RISK INTENSIFIES FOR DEFENDERS AFTER KILLING

Rogelio Martínez, one of the leaders of a human rights organization in north-western Colombia, was shot dead on 18 May. His family and colleagues' lives are also at risk.

Colleagues of human rights defender **Rogelio Martínez** could be at risk following his killing on 18 May. Rogelio Martínez was one of the leaders of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, MOVICE) in the department of Sucre, north-western Colombia. He was also the leader of a community of peasant farmers (*campesinos*) who recovered their farm in 2006 after it had been stolen by paramilitaries. Rogelio Martínez's family and other peasant farmers who live in the farm could also be at risk.

On 18 May at around 6 pm, six men wearing balaclavas and dressed in black opened fire against Rogelio Martínez as he was riding on the back of a motorbike taxi. The assault took place near his home on a farm called "La Alemania", in the municipality of San Onofre, Sucre department. Rogelio Martínez had reported a death threat by phone on 15 June 2009.

The MOVICE branch in Sucre is headed by **Ingrid Vergara**, who has received a number of death threats in the last two years. Most recently, on 5 February 2010, a MOVICE volunteer who works closely with Ingrid Vergara was followed and threatened with a gun. Some of the leaders of MOVICE in Sucre department have already received the protection that they requested from the authorities; others, like Ingrid Vergara, are still calling on the authorities to implement most of the agreed measures.

No-one has been arrested in connection with the killing of Rogelio Martínez. No-one has been brought to justice for the killing of 11 other people linked to the "La Alemania" farm or for the attacks against the other members of the MOVICE branch in Sucre.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Rogelio Martínez's family, of the other peasant farmers of the "La Alemania" farm and of Ingrid Vergara and the rest of the leadership of MOVICE in the department of Sucre;
- Urging the authorities to provide them with effective protection in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to carry out a full, swift and impartial investigation into the killing of Rogelio Martínez and into the death threats against Ingrid Vergara and other members of MOVICE;
- Calling on the authorities to recognise the legitimacy of human rights defenders and the important work that they do as mentioned in the 1998 UN declaration on human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JULY 2010 TO:

Vice-President

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón
Vicepresidencia de la República
Carrera 8A No 7-27
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 565 7682

**Salutation: Dear Vice-president/
Estimado Sr. Vicepresidente**

Acting Attorney General

Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Fiscal General de la Nación (e)
Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán
No. 52-01) Bloque C
Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (dial extension
2017 on hearing the welcome message)**
**Salutation: Dear Attorney
General/Estimado Sr. Fiscal General**

And copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sr. Jaime Bermúdez
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San
Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 381 47 21
**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the 2nd update of UA 301/09. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/027/2009/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/007/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MOVICE is a broad coalition of civil society organizations campaigning for truth, justice and reparation for the victims of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict.

Ingrid Vergara and her colleagues in MOVICE have documented and exposed many cases of killings and enforced disappearance carried out by the security forces and the paramilitary groups in Sucre department. Rogelio Martínez campaigned for the right to truth, justice and reparation for the displaced communities of the municipality of San Onofre.

On 2 April 2008, unknown men threatened to kill Ingrid Vergara's daughter, Cendy Torres, in reprisal for the work of Ingrid Vergara. On 26 October 2009, Cendy Torres received a death threat addressed to Ingrid Vergara.

The internal armed conflict in Colombia continues to have devastating consequences on the civilian population. Indigenous people and Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities are particularly hard hit. All the warring parties – including the security forces, guerrilla groups and paramilitary groups – have been responsible for serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

The number of internally displaced people continues to increase, although at a slower rate than in recent years. According to a national human rights organization, more than 286,000 people were newly displaced in 2009.

Paramilitary groups have returned a small portion of the four to six million hectares that they stole from civilians, but there were concerns that some of these lands could again fall under the control of such groups or their backers. Activists campaigning for the return of lands stolen by paramilitary groups have been particularly vulnerable to threats and killings in recent years. Most of these attacks are attributed to paramilitary groups.

Despite government claims that all paramilitaries demobilized in a government-sponsored programme that began in 2003, such groups continue to operate and commit serious human rights violations against human rights defenders and other civilians. This is sometimes in collusion with the security forces, or with their consent.

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