

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER FACES HARASSMENT

**Human rights defender Paulina Muñoz Samaniego has been subjected to an intimidation campaign which she believes is related to her work with Ecuador Decide, a platform of civil society organizations which oppose the Free Trade Agreement between Ecuador and the European Union. She and other members of Ecuador Decide may be at risk.**

**Paulina Muñoz Samaniego** has been facing harassment since October 2014 in connection with her work with Ecuador Decide, which has been campaigning against the Free Trade Agreement between Ecuador and the European Union, arguing it could jeopardise the rights to food, water, health, education and labour rights of the most vulnerable in the country. Paulina Muñoz Samaniego has recently returned to Ecuador after spending three months abroad in fear for her safety, as she had received a series of anonymous threatening messages.

On 25 June as she was walking to work Paulina Muñoz Samaniego was confronted on the street by a woman in a car who honked and shouted at her. Simultaneously a man approached her from behind and threw a bouquet of flowers with a note welcoming her back to the country. The Public Prosecutor's office in Quito refused to accept a complaint she tried to file on 29 July on the grounds that the incident did not constitute harassment. However, her complaint was finally accepted the following day. Since then, no one from the Public Prosecutor's office has been in contact with her with regard to her complaint or to offer her protection.

The first anonymous threatening message Paulina Muñoz received was sent to her home in October 2014. In the letter there was a warning message: "You are being watched, followed closely, they have made you good offers but you have not yielded, you are on the list of people who do not take bribes. Take care, they will involve you in the things that you least expect, but enough to condemn or retire you".

In February 2015, after participating in an event as a spokesperson for Ecuador Decide she received a second anonymous note referring to her participation in this event and saying: "You still have a chance, just let us know, you know who to go to, fix your life, your economy.... Do not expose yourself". On several occasions since November 2014 Ecuador Decide's Facebook page and email account have been hacked.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Express concern for the safety of Paulina Muñoz Samaniego, calling on the authorities to put in place protection measures for her in strict accordance with her wishes;
- Urging them to investigate, fully and impartially, the complaint made by Paulina Muñoz Samaniego and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them that states have the responsibility to protect human rights defenders and create the conditions necessary to ensure that they can carry out their legitimate activities without any unfair restrictions or fear of reprisals, as established in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 SEPTEMBER 2015 TO:**

District Attorney Office  
Fiscalía Provincial de Pichincha  
Roca 936 y Juan León Mera  
Conmutador principal  
Quito, Ecuador

**Salutation: Dear District  
Attorney/Estimado Fiscal Provincial  
de Pichincha**

Minister of Justice  
Dra. Ledy Zúñiga Rocha  
Ministra de Justicia, Derechos humanos  
y Cultos  
Av. Colón entre Diego de Almagro y  
Reina Victoria. Edif Torres de Almagro.  
Quito, Ecuador  
Email: comunicacion@minjusticia.gob.ec  
**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Señora  
Ministra**

### **And copies to:**

INREDH  
Avenida 10 de Agosto N34-80 y  
Rumipamba. Piso 1  
(Frente a la parada El Florón, del  
Trolebus)  
Quito, Ecuador

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Different social movements and groups joined a march on 2 August to protest against several government initiatives, including the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union. The march is expected to reach Quito on around 13 August. Members of Ecuador Decide are taking part in this march.

Ecuador Decide was formed in 2004 in response to the negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between Ecuador and the USA which ultimately failed. Ecuador Decide has continued its campaign against Free Trade Agreements. They oppose the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Ecuador and the European Union which was signed in December 2014 following negotiations that had concluded in July 2014. Ecuador Decide believes this agreement will negatively affect small producers as well as impact on the rights to food, water, health, education and labour rights of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Before it can be implemented, the agreement has to be ratified by the National Assembly of Ecuador, which may happen imminently. Ecuador Decide is opposing the ratification.

Paulina Muñoz Samaniego was the spokesperson of Ecuador Decide from its creation until recently, when the spokesperson duties were passed on to a coordination group made up of several organizations, including the International civil servants ISP / Medical College of Pichincha, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the National Platform of Women, the National Union of Educators, the Environmental Movement and the Assembly of the Peoples of the South.

Name: Paulina Muñoz Samaniego

Gender m/f: f

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