

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

**On 14 April two men tried to break into the home of Zoraida Hernández, President of human rights NGO *Corporación Sembrar*, in Bogotá, Colombia. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Zoraida Hernández and members of *Corporación Sembrar*.**

On 14 April two men climbed onto the balcony of **Zoraida Hernández's** third-floor apartment and tried to force entry into her home. During this incident her phone and the intercom to the reception of the building were apparently disabled. Zoraida Hernández and her husband began to shout for help and the men fled. The phone and the intercom started working again a few minutes later. Zoraida Hernández, who is also a spokesperson for the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas del Estado, MOVICE*), has recently been speaking publicly about the restitution of lands stolen by paramilitary groups, either acting alone or in collusion with the security forces. She has also publicly criticized aspects of the government's proposed victims' law and the privileges given to members of the armed forces suspected of human rights violations.

On 5 November 2010, two armed men came looking for **Cenelia Serna**, Secretary General of *Corporación Sembrar*, at a hotel where she was staying in the municipality of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca Department. On 6 November 2010 both armed men came looking for her at a new location where she was staying. She had been in the region for several days working with Afro descendant leaders.

The incident in Zoraida Hernández's building came a few weeks after *Corporación Sembrar* had withdrawn from the government's protection programme arguing that the measures provided were inadequate. The government had agreed to meet *Corporación Sembrar* before 15 March to discuss security measures, but last information received indicates that a meeting has yet to take place. Human rights lawyer **Jorge Molano**, who has been threatened repeatedly in the past and also works with *Corporación Sembrar*, has also withdrawn from the state's protection programme.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of Zoraida Hernández, her family, and others working with *Corporación Sembrar* and urge the authorities to guarantee their safety in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Call on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the attempted break-in, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to account;
- Urge them to fulfil their obligations regarding the situation of human rights defenders, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 JUNE 2011 TO:

#### President

Juan Manuel Santos  
Señor Presidente Juan Manuel Santos  
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 596 0631**

**Salutation:** Dear President Santos/  
Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos

#### Minister of Interior and Justice

Señor Germán Vargas Lleras  
Ministerio Del Interior y De Justicia  
Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá  
Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 599 8961**

**Salutation:** Dear Minister Vargas  
/Estimado Sr. Ministro Vargas

#### **And copies to:**

#### NGO

*Corporación Sembrar*  
Calle 19 No 4-88  
Bogotá  
Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AT RISK

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Colombian NGOs and human rights defenders campaigning for the return of lands stolen mainly by paramilitary groups over the course of the long running armed conflict in Colombia have been particularly vulnerable to threats and killings in recent years. Most of these attacks are attributed to paramilitary groups. Guerrilla groups have also targeted human rights defenders and other social activists deemed to be a threat to their interests.

Despite government claims that all paramilitaries have been 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.

*Corporación Sembrar* has worked with local communities opposed to the multinational mining companies in the South of Bolívar Department and also on other high-profile cases such as that concerning the forced displacement of communities from Las Pavas in the municipality of El Peñón, in the South of Bolívar Department, in northern Colombia. The community returned to their land on 4 April following a dialogue with the government in which Zoraida Hernández participated. Over the years members of *Corporación Sembrar* have been the target of several threats, including death threats in 2008 and 2009.

UA: 119/11 Index: AMR 23/012/2011 Issue Date: 21 April 2011

