

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S FAMILY THREATENED

The lives of Colombian human rights defender Ingrid Vergara and her family face new threats after an attack in their home. Ingrid Vergara has been documenting and exposing human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups.

On 1 December two armed men entered the house of Ingrid Vergara in the city of Sincelejo, in the northern department of Sucre, while her mother and her 15-year-old-daughter Cendy Torres Vergara were at home. The two men forced Ingrid Vergara's mother into a room and screamed "Where is the money, where are the millions?" One man then grabbed Cendy Torres by her throat and pointed an object into her back, which Cendy believes was a weapon. They screamed at her "Give us the documents and the camera. Don't look at me, don't look at me, we are going to kill you out here."

The men searched the room and forcefully removed the hard drive of a computer belonging to the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE*). Ingrid Vergara is one of the leaders of MOVICE. The hard drive contained information on work Ingrid had been carrying out related to land issues, specifically documentation for a public meeting scheduled on 3 December. The two men only took the hard drive, the monitor and 40, 000 Colombian Pesos (approx 20 US\$), but no other valuables which were openly on sight. As they were leaving one man said "don't kill her, don't kill her".

This incident follows previous threats and acts of intimidation against Ingrid Vergara in the past weeks. On 20 November Ingrid Vergara received a call on her mobile phone. The caller told her "don't get into land issues" and then hung up after a silence. When she dialled the number, it was a public phone in Santa Catalina, a neighbourhood of Sincelejo. Five days later, on 25 November two more calls were made from the same number.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Ingrid Vergara and her family and urging the authorities to guarantee their safety in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the 1 December incident and previous death threats against Ingrid Vergara, her daughter Cendy Torres and her colleagues, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding 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 13 JANUARY 2011 TO:

Señor Vicepresidente Angelino Garzón
Vicepresidente de la República,
Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8a No 7-57,
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 444 2158
(say "Me da tono por favor")
**Salutation: Dear Vicepresident Garzón/
Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente Garzón**

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:

Movice
Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de
Crímenes de Estado
Calle 38 No 28 A 30
Barrio Bogotá
Sincelejo, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office. This is the third update of UA 301/09. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/027/2009/en> <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/007/2010/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR23/019/2010/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S FAMILY THREATENED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 2 April 2008, unknown men threatened to kill Cendy Torres, supposedly in reprisal for her mother's work as a human rights defender. On 26 October 2009, Cendy Torres received a death threat addressed to Ingrid Vergara.

On 18 May 2010 Rogelio Martínez, one of the leaders of MOVICE in Sucre department was shot dead. He had been campaigning for the right for truth, justice and reparation for displaced communities.

On 12 October 2010 Ingrid Vergara identified a possible attempt to kill her on the Majagual square in Sincelejo. One of her bodyguards, provided to her by the Ministry of Interior's protection programme, noticed three suspicious men near Ingrid Vergara talking about the absence of her second bodyguard. When two more men approached Ingrid Vergara on a motorcycle the bodyguard urged her to quickly leave the square.

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 paramilitary groups in Sucre department.

The Colombian government has implemented some protection measures for Ingrid Vergara and Cendy Torres, including the provision of bodyguards, a mobile phone and a vehicle, but restrictions on the use of fuel have apparently limited Ingrid Vergara's mobility.

Activists campaigning for the return of lands stolen mainly by paramilitary groups over the course of the conflict 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 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.

FU on UA: 301/09 Index: AMR 23/036/2010 Issue Date: 03 December 2010

