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Colombia: Amnesty International condemns attack against human rights defender

The invaluable work carried out by human rights defenders in Colombia must be respected by all the parties to the armed conflict, Amnesty International said following yesterday's attempt on the life of human rights activist Islena Rey in Puerto Rico Municipality in Meta Department.

Islena Rey, President of the Meta Human Rights Civic Committee, was travelling by boat along the Guejar river together with Miguel Martínez from the Association of Peasant Farmers from the Bajo Ariari (AGROGUEJAR) and human rights lawyer Daniel Piedrahita when members of the guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) reportedly opened fire seriously injuring Islena Rey. The other members of the group emerged unharmed.

"The attempt on the life of Islena Rey is a tragic and all too common demonstration of the precarious situation still facing human rights defenders in Colombia," said Marcelo Pollack, Amnesty International's Researcher on Colombia.

"Hundreds of activists are still the target of threats and killings at the hands of all the parties to the conflict, be they the security forces, paramilitaries or guerrilla groups without anybody proving them with effective protection," said Marcelo Pollack.

Amnesty International unreservedly condemns this latest attack on a human rights defender and calls on the FARC, and on all the parties to the conflict, to once and for all respect the right of the civilian population not to be dragged into Colombia's long-running armed conflict.

Amnesty International calls on the Colombian authorities to investigate the attack against Islena Rey and her companions and to bring those responsible to justice. The organization also called on the authorities to provide effective guarantees to ensure the safety of human rights defenders and other social and community activists.