

via fax: 011 57 1 566 20 71 <b>President Alvaro Uribe Velez</b> President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 414 9108 <b>Dr. Mario Iguaran</b> Attorney General, Colombia	Via fax: 011 57 1 560 4630 <b>Sr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega</b> Minister of the Interior and Justice, Colombia
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July 2, 2006

Dear Sirs:

Tragically, the following shocking account of intimidation and harassment of a leading human rights worker is all too common in Colombia. We are seriously concerned for the safety of **Gloria Amparo Suarez**, a leader of the Popular Women's Organization (OFP). In recent years the OFP has repeatedly been threatened by army-backed paramilitary groups because of the human rights work the organization undertakes.

On June 12, 2006, Gloria Amparo's husband was accosted by an unidentified man who told him, "Tell your wife that she has a month to leave Barrancabermeja or she will be taken. Don't say anything, don't denounce, don't make a scandal or else you will be the dead person."

This latest threat followed the appearance of a written threat circulating in Barrancabermeja since June 5. It informs "movements, associations, corporations, trade unions, organizations" that from June 1-5 "there will be cleansing of revolutionary informers." It continues, "Death to the son-of-bitch informers in Barranca, bastard guerrillas." This threat followed an e-mail death threat sent to several human rights organizations, including OFP, from Colombia Libre de Comunistas. That is the name given by the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) on its website.

We have written at least five previous letters urging Colombian officials to protect OFP members:

- June 13, 2002: the oil workers union (USO) was informed of a plot by paramilitaries (AUC) to kill Yolanda Becerra
- June 26, 2003: several OFP members, including Yolanda Becerra, were threatened
- October 26, 2003: death threat against Yolanda Becerra; murder of Esperanza Amaris Miranda on October 16
- February 13, 2004: armed men fired upon OFP members; Ines Peña was abducted and tortured by paramilitaries
- January 23, 2005: a bomb threat was made and a box left outside the office (fortunately, a hoax)

The authorities can do no less than:

- take effective action, deemed appropriate by Gloria Amparo, her family and other OFP members, to protect them;
- ensure that OFP can safely continue its important work in defense of human rights;
- investigate all threats against human rights defenders and bring those responsible to justice;
- initiate full and impartial investigations into links between government security forces and paramilitary groups and make the results public;
- produce policy and plans to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders, according to the principles of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and make these plans public.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

CC: Andres Pastrana, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax  
William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax  
Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax  
Dr. Francisco Santos, Vice-President of Colombia ~ via fax  
Dr. Michael Frulin, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax  
US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email  
US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 177/06 Colombia

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**