

IRTF

InterReligious Task Force on Central America
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via fax: 011 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92 / 566 20 71 Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez Presidente de la Republica de Colombia	via fax: 011-571-570 20 00 Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio Fiscalía General de la Nación, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 222 18 74 Dr. Jorge Alberto Uribe Ministro de la Defensa, Colombia	via fax: 011-571-337-46 67 Dr. Carlos Franco , Director del Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos, Colombia
via fax: 011-571-342.97.23 Dr. Edgardo José Maya Villazón Procuraduría General de la Nación, Colombia	via fax: 011-574-381-1852 Señor Sergio Fajardo Mayor of Medellín, Antioquia Dept, Colombia

October 29, 2004

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply saddened and outraged by the **brutal murder of Teresa Yarce**, treasurer of the Community Action Board of Las Independencias III, on October 6. A young man, recognized by witnesses as a member of the paramilitary forces, shot her three times in the head near her home in the Comuna 13 district of Medellín. A bus awaited the gunman and drove him away. At the time of the murder, one of Teresa's daughters and her colleague Mery del Socorro Naranjo Jiménez were with her.

Teresa Yarce and other social activists have played an active part in ensuring that paramilitary forces do not establish a firm foothold in the Las Independencias III area, as they have in other parts of Comuna 13 and elsewhere in Medellín. They work at grassroots levels to promote human rights and encourage people to report violations. A few weeks before she was killed, Teresa escaped a paramilitary attempt to abduct and kill her as she walked on the street.

We wrote to you on January 23, 2003 about the need to guarantee the safety of social organizations in Comuna 13. In particular, we expressed our concern for Teresa Yarce, Mery del Socorro Naranjo Jiménez (President of the Community Action Board), and Maria del Socorro Mosquera (President and legal representative of the Women's Association of Las Independencias).

Mery del Socorro Naranjo Jiménez and Maria del Socorro Mosquera are living under renewed threat:

- Mery Naranjo was standing next to Teresa Yarce when she was murdered on October 6
- Three hours after Teresa's murder, a paramilitary member came to Mery Naranjo's home and told her that now they "will kill the other two"
- On October 19, a young woman went to the home of Mery Naranjo's family and told one of her daughters that because Mery had left the neighborhood, they would kill one of her children.

Because of the danger that exists for these community leaders in the Comuna 13 district of Medellín, we demand that you:

- Take all measures deemed appropriate by the women themselves to guarantee their safety;
- Initiate a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Teresa Yarce, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- Take immediate and effective action to ensure that members of the Women's Association of Medellín (AMI) and other social organizations in Comuna 13 can safely carry out their legitimate and important work for the defense of human rights.

As officials of the government of Colombia, you have obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolution; and in repeated recommendations made to them by the United Nations.

Thank you for your prompt attention to protect the lives of Mery del Socorro Naranjo Jiménez and Maria del Socorro Mosquera.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

copies to:

Luis Alberto Moreno, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 1 202 232 8643

William B Wood, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: fax: 011-571-315-2197

Charles Barclay, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via fax: 202.647.2628

Dr. Wolmar Perez Ortiz, Defensoría del Pueblo ~ via fax: 011-571-640 04 91

Senator George Voinovich, US Senate ~ via email: Daniel_knezevic@voinovich.senate.gov

Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich, US House of Representatives ~ via email: Samantha.spinney@mail.house.gov

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Rep Steve LaTourette, US House of Representatives ~ via email: kate.ostrander@mail.house.gov

Rep Tim Ryan, US House of Representatives ~ via email: john.Stephan@mail.house.gov

Rep Stephanie Tubbs Jones, US House of Representatives ~ via email: tannaz.haddadi@mail.house.gov

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