

via fax: 011 57 1 342 05 92

**Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez**

President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 562 78 22

**Sr. Fernando Araujo Perdomo**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000

**Dr. Mario Germán Iguaran Arana**

Attorney General of Colombia

November 15, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are seriously concerned for the safety of **Yolanda Becerra**, President of the Popular Women's Organization (**OFP**), her family and other OFP members, following the assault she suffered at her home in the municipality of Barrancabermeja, Santander Department.

At 7.30 pm on November 4, when Yolanda Becerra responded to a knock on the door at her home, she was confronted by two hooded armed men who shoved her against the wall and threatened her with a gun. One man said: ". . .it's over, you have 48 hours to leave; otherwise we will put an end to your family and you will not escape." The men then searched her home for the next fifteen minutes, destroying many items.

On October 22, Yolanda Becerra, as President of the OFP, sent a letter to the Colombian Vice-President, Francisco Santos, reporting a written death threat signed by the paramilitary group Aguilas Negras that was received at the OFP office on July 7. To date, there is no information regarding any response to this letter from the Colombian authorities. The recent threat against Yolanda Becerra heightens our concern for her safety and that of other human rights defenders in Barrancabermeja.

We are aware that, although paramilitary groups have supposedly been demobilized, many continue to operate, often using new names to cover up the fact that they have not actually demobilized and that their structures remain intact.

As a result of our concern for the safety of Yolanda Becerra, her family and other OFP activists following the threats against her and her family on November 4, **we strongly urge** you to:

- take effective action, as deemed appropriate Yolanda Becerra, her family and other OFP members, to protect them and ensure that OFP can safely continue its legitimate and important work in human rights;
- immediately order full and impartial investigations into the threats of Nov. 4 and July 7, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice;
- take decisive action, in line with repeated UN recommendations, to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces.

We have written several letters to Colombian authorities over the past few years demanding protection for Yolanda Becerra and her colleagues and justice for the murder of Esperanza Amaris Miranda (16 Oct 2003) and murders of other OFP members. We implore you to take these threats seriously and take necessary measures to protect OFP members.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Organización Femenina Popular ~ via US mail  
 Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 Ambassador William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197  
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173  
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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