

Via fax: 011 57 1 566 7682
Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon
Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia

Via Fax: 011 57 1 414 9108
Dr. Guillermo Mendoza Diago
Acting Attorney General of Colombia

May 26, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We continue to be extremely concerned for the safety of human rights defender **Ingrid Vergara** and her 14 year-old daughter **Cendy Torres Vergara** and other members of MOVICE following the May 18 assassination of MOVICE member **Rogelio Martínez**.

Ingrid Vergara heads the Sucre Department branch of MOVICE (National Movement of Victims of State Crimes), a coalition of civil society organizations campaigning for truth, justice and reparation for the victims of human rights violations committed during Colombia's long-running armed conflict. Some of the MOVICE leaders in Sucre have already received the protection that they requested from authorities; Ingrid Vergara is still calling on the authorities to implement most of the agreed upon measures.

Rogelio Martínez was also a MOVICE leader in Sucre as well as the leader of a community of peasant farmers who recovered their farm in 2006 after it had been stolen by paramilitaries. At approximately 6pm on May 18, six men wearing balaclavas and dressed in black opened fire against Rogelio Martínez as he was riding on a motorbike taxi near his home on the "La Alemania" farm in the municipality of San Onofre. He had reported a death threat by phone on June 15, 2009. Rogelio Martínez's family and the other 51 families who live on the farm could also be at risk. Fourteen others connected with "La Alemania" farm have been killed in recent years.

We have previously written to authorities about human rights abuses against MOVICE members (most recently December 1, 2009 because of threats to Ingrid Vergara and Cendy Torres Vergara). We are disappointed to learn that **Carmelo Agámez**, Technical Secretary of MOVICE in Sucre, is still being unjustly detained—being falsely charged of having ties to paramilitaries—after 18 months. Unfortunately, Agamez's unjust detention is just one emblematic example of a much bigger problem: the extensive use of malicious criminal investigations and trumped-up charges to silence human rights activists in Colombia.

In light of these ongoing threats and attacks against members of MOVICE in Sucre, we strongly urge that you

- carry out a full, open, swift and impartial investigation into the killing of Rogelio Martínez and into the death threats against Ingrid Vergara, Cendy Torres Vergara, and other members of MOVICE;
- provide members of the family of Rogelio Martínez, members of "La Alemania" farm, and members of MOVICE with effective protection measures, in accordance with their wishes
- bring to a just and prompt resolution the improper detention of MOVICE member Carmelo Agámez.

Sincerely

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Sr. Jaime Bermúdez, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia ~ via fax 011-571-565-7682
Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
Nan N. Fife, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
Christian Volkmann, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011.571. 658-3300
Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Colombian member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

UA301/09update Colombia

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