

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 381 4742 Sr. Fiscal Eduardo Montealegre Attorney General of Colombia
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March 6, 2013

Dear President Santos and Attorney General Montealegre:

We are seriously concerned for the safety of women human rights defenders, especially members and leaders of the Popular Women's Organization (OFP, *Organización Femenina Popular*), based in Barrancabermeja, Santander, who have been repeatedly threatened by army-backed paramilitary groups. We have written more than 12 letters over the past decade for protection for OFP members and investigations into human rights abuses carried out against them, including assassination. Many OFP members are involved in demanding victims' right to truth, justice and reparation.

On February 11, a man entered the OFP office. He asked **Gloria Amparo Suárez**, the legal representative of OFP, if she knew where her children were. Then he said "we do" as he showed her photos of her sons on his mobile phone. He also showed her a picture of OFP director **Yolanda Becerra**. He threatened: "Tell Becerra that [...] we know all of her movements so, as you already know, stop this shit and be quiet..."

On February 13 OFP member **Jackeline Rojas Castañeda** received a threat by email. The threat also named **Ana Teresa Rueda Lozada** and **Dolores Flores**, who work for Space of Human Rights Workers and **Carolina Rubio Sguerra**, the secretary general of Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee. The threat said they knew about Jackeline Rojas's recent visits to Bolívar and César Departments in the course of her human rights work. All four women have been denouncing human rights violations in the region. The email threatened that the two men the government has assigned to protect Jackeline Rojas would be killed if they did their job.

We are also concerned about recent threats to women from other human rights organizations:

- Feb 19: **Yeidy Yeraldin Rojas Chacón**, member of the Board of Directors of ASORVIMM (Magdalena Medio Victim's Association), was stopped as she traveled to an event, was ill-treated and drugged by persons who said they were looking for Lilia Peña, president of ASORVIMM
- Feb 21: an assassination attempt was made on **Nancy Julieth Tarriba**, LGBT rights defender and member of Gente en Acción (People in Action). She subsequently received a threat warning her to leave Barrancabermeja within 24 hours.
- Feb 22: two armed men entered the home of human rights defender **Bernardina Bermúdez**, intimidated her and showed her a photo of **Lilia Peña** (of ASORVIMM), saying that Peña was their target. The next day Bernardina Bermúdez received a threatening phone call and was later pursued by a high-powered motorcycle driven by men making threats.
- Feb 23: **Luz Elsia Almanza Suárez**, coordinator of the Barrancabermeja branch of Association for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (ASFADDES) received an envelope which contained a bullet and a note (signed by the Anti-Land Restitution Army) warning her to leave town in 12 hours.

The climate for these women human rights defenders is grave. Therefore **we strongly urge** that you:

- conduct full and impartial investigations into the threats made against these women, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice; and
- provide these women with protective measures, in strict accordance with their wishes.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Organización Femenina Popular ~ via US mail
 Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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