

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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April 12, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to secure accountable actions toward protection and justice for **Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido**, a women's rights defender who has been receiving death threats. From the village of El Salado in the Caribbean region of Colombia, Bolívar Department, she is the legal representative of the Asociación Mujeres Sembrando Vida (Women Sowing Life Association).

Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido has received death threats periodically since 2019 and has been the victim of stigmatization that has forced her to move several times to safeguard her life. The message she received via text message on March 21 stated "we will fill you with lead if you continue to defend bitches," and included private information about the defender. The threats used misogynistic language to threaten her mother and the lawyers from Corporación SISMA MUJER, who assist in her work advocating for women's rights.

On March 25, her house in El Salado was set on fire by unknown persons. Luckily, no one was home, and only material possessions were lost. Both the death threat and the house fire were reported to authorities. We are unaware as to whether Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido has received notifications regarding the progress of any investigations.

A survivor of sexual violence in the El Salado massacre of 2000, Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido She has worked with women from the region on behalf of victims of sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia. Because her life has been threatened on multiple occasions, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in favor of her and her family in 2020.

We strongly urge authorities in Colombia to:

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into arson of her house and the death threats against Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido, her family members, and her fellow lawyers, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido, as well as that of her family and her lawyers, in consultation with them
- guarantee in all circumstances that women human rights defenders in Colombia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including threats.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
Daniel Palacios, Minister of the Interior ~ via email
Joel Hernández García, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
Julissa Mantilla Falcón, Rapporteur on the Rights of Women, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
US Embassy: Kristen Farrell (human rights) and Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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