

# URGENT ACTION

## DEATH THREATS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**Four human rights defenders received a death threat in Cali, south-western Colombia. All four women are campaigning for justice in cases of serious human rights violations implicating members of the armed forces.**

On 15 September a piece of paper with a death threat was pushed under the office door of the human rights NGO Association for Social Research and Action (*Asociación para la Investigación y Acción Social, NOMADESC*), while the organization, together with the Committee of Women Partners of Sugar Cane Workers (*Comité de Mujeres Corteras de la Caña*), was holding a workshop in the office of NOMADESC in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department.

The death threat named **Berenice Celeyta** and **Olga Araújo**, who are members of NOMADESC, as well as **Alfamir Castillo** from the Committee of Women Partners of Sugar Cane Workers. It also named **Martha Giraldo** from the Valle del Cauca branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE*).

All four human rights defenders have been campaigning for justice in cases of serious human rights violations. In some cases there has been a conviction of members of the armed forces for extrajudicial executions. NOMADESC has also been working closely with Afro-descendant, Indigenous and peasant farmer communities who have faced serious human rights violations committed by paramilitaries and the security forces in the context of the development of large-scale economic projects, including projects in the mining, hydroelectric or agro industrial sector. On 22 September all four participated as leaders in a public meeting on empowering women campaigning for economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in Cali.

**Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Expressing concern for the safety of Berenice Celeyta, Olga Araújo, Alfamir Castillo and Martha Giraldo, and calling on the authorities to ensure protection measures for them in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Urging the authorities to fully and impartially investigate the threat and prosecute those responsible;
- Demanding commitment from the authorities to take decisive action to end extrajudicial executions, and guarantee the protection of those campaigning for justice in line with United Nations human rights recommendations that have been repeatedly been issued;
- Reminding the authorities to fulfil their obligations to ensure human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 NOVEMBER 2013 TO:**

President

Presidente Juan Manuel Santos  
 Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/  
 Excmo Sr. Presidente Santos**

Minister of Defence

Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón  
 Ministerio de Defensa  
 Carrera 54, no.26-29  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

**Salutation: Dear Minister Pinzón/  
 Sr. Ministro Pinzón**

**And copies to:**

Local human rights organization  
 NOMADESC  
 Carrera 9 No 4-53  
 Barrio San Antonio  
 Cali  
 Colombia

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Berenice Celeyta and Olga Araújo have been repeatedly threatened over many years. In June 2013 the office of the Attorney General charged three members of the armed forces in relation to "Operación Dragón". This was a plot coordinated by military intelligence to kill human rights defenders, trade unionists and left-wing politicians. Berenice Celeyta and Olga Araújo were on a list of those who were supposedly to be killed in relation to "Operación Dragón".

Alfamir Castillo and Martha Giraldo also have been repeatedly threatened.

Alfamir Castillo is the mother of Davey Mosquera Castillo, who was killed together with Alex Hernando Ramírez Hurtado by members of the Colombian army on 8 February 2008 in the rural area of Manizales Municipality, Caldas Department. Soldiers from the Counter Guerrilla Battalion 57 Mártires de Puerres of the VIII Brigade were implicated and seven members of the armed forces have been convicted for their part in the extrajudicial execution. These convictions are currently being appealed. In August a court hearing was scheduled to establish the responsibility of senior commanders in the killings.

Martha Giraldo is the daughter of peasant farmer José Orlando Giraldo Becerra, who was killed by members of the III Brigade in the area of Golondrinas, Cali Municipality, Valle del Cauca Department on 11 March 2006. He was presented as a guerrilla fighter killed in combat, a so-called "false positive" killing. This refers to the unlawful killing of civilians by members of the security forces who are then falsely presented as guerrillas and paramilitaries killed in combat. In August 2013 a court confirmed the conviction of a former chief of military intelligence of the High Mountain Battalion 3 (*Batallón de Alto Montaña 3*) for the extrajudicial execution of José Orlando Giraldo Becerra; other members of the armed forces are still under investigation for their possible role in the killing of José Orlando Giraldo Becerra.

During the long-running armed conflict in Colombia, extrajudicial executions have been carried out by the security forces in a widespread and systematic manner. They have been part of the terror tactics used by the security forces as part of their counter-insurgency strategy. The Attorney General's Office has recorded more 4,000 cases of extrajudicial executions reportedly committed by the security forces, including many so called "falsos positivos". Those campaigning for justice in cases of extrajudicial executions have been repeatedly subjected to death threats; some have been killed by members of the security forces or paramilitaries working with them.

In December 2012 a Constitutional reform was passed which broadened the scope of military justice, followed by an enabling law to the reform in June 2013. Amnesty International has expressed concern that this reform will increase impunity for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by the members of the security forces. (See press release, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/colombia-congress-should-reject-law-reforming-military-justice-system-2013->).

Name: Berenice Celeyta, Olga Araújo, Alfamir Castillo, Martha Giraldo  
Gender m/f: f

UA: 265/13 Index: AMR 23/043/2013 Issue Date: 25 September 2013