

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Exmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1266 1003 Sr. Juan Carlos Pinzón Minister of Defense of Colombia
--	---

October 22, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply troubled to learn of death threats to human rights defenders in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department: **Berenice Celeyta** and **Olga Araújo**, members of the Association for Social Research and Action (NOMADESC), **Alfamir Castillo** from the Committee of Women Partners of Sugar Cane Workers and **Martha Giraldo** from the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE).

On September 15 a paper with a death threat naming the four women was pushed under the office door of NOMADESC where their organizations were holding a workshop. They have been campaigning for justice in cases of serious human rights violations implicating members of the armed forces—some of whom have been convicted of 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 large-scale economic projects, including projects in the mining, hydroelectric or agro-industrial sector. On September 22 the four women participated as leaders in a public meeting on empowering women who are campaigning for economic, social, cultural and environmental rights in Cali.

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 concerning “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 to be killed in “Operación Dragón.” Alfamir Castillo and Martha Giraldo also have been repeatedly threatened. Since 2008 we have written more than 20 letters to Colombian officials about the continued threats, abductions and assassinations of MOVICE members, including threats to Martha Giraldo.

For these reasons we **strongly urge** that you

- ensure protection measures for the women named above in strict accordance with their wishes;
- conduct full and impartial investigations into the threats against them and prosecute those responsible; take decisive action to end extrajudicial executions; and
- guarantee the protection of human rights defenders so that they can carry out their work without fear, as laid out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: NOMADESC – via U.S. mail
First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia 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

UA 265/13_Colombia

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