

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 <b>Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2091 <b>Sr. Fiscal Eduardo Montealegre Lynett</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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April 11, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply troubled to learn that on April 3, Sor María Sampayo, a community educator and leader of the Organización Femenina Popular (OFP, Popular Women’s Organization) received a threatening phone call from someone who identified himself as Alirio Torresa, commander of the neo-paramilitary group Los Urabeños. OFP, which is based in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, advocates for the rights of victims and for reparation processes. The OFP director is Yolanda Becerra, the daughter of Sor María Sampayo.

He demanded payment of “three million pesos [US \$1500] to the paramilitary group to mobilize thirty men from Medellín to carry out a social-cleansing plan to eliminate drug addicts, prostitutes, and everything that smells like a guerrilla.” He described to Sor María her whereabouts, where she and her daughter worked, and the color of the motorcycle she drove.

When she asked him whether he was demanding a “vacuna”—a vaccine, or paramilitary protection money—he responded, “No, it’s a donation, and you have 120 days to pay.” He said that if she did not donate he would “shoot her, because I know where you live.” She hung up, he called back and this time Yolanda Becerra answered the phone. She told him that threats against Sor María Sampayo are threats against the OFP, to which he responded, “I know who you are; you bastards are going to die too, you can be sure of that.”

OFP has filed denunciations with the Colombian government, demanding “urgent measures be adopted that guarantee the life, integrity and the free movement of Sor María Sampayo as a human rights defender, and the implementation of precautionary measures similar to those granted by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to the OFP.

We have written more than 12 letters over the past decade for protection of OFP members and investigations into human rights abuses carried out against them, including assassination. For these reasons we:

- urge you to provide protection requested by OFP under Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council;
- urge you to order a full and impartial investigation into the threats and extortion attempts against Sor María Sampayo and Yolanda Becerra, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- remind you that the US signed a free trade agreement with Colombia and as citizens of the US we expect our trading partner and our respective governments to treat such threats against human rights defenders as a matter of the highest priority;
- ask for a reply to let us know what steps have been taken.

Sincerely,

**Brian J. Stefan Szittai**  
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Organización Femenina Popular ~ via email  
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email  
 Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
 Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
 José de Jesus Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via fax

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