

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631
Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 261 6287
Sr. Andres Villamizar
 Director of the Protection Unit of Colombia

June 25, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of human rights defenders **Ingrid Vergara** and **Jeison Pava**, as well as **Adolfo Verbel Rocha** and **Orlando Verbel** and other members of the Verbel family in Sucre Department. The two defenders have been accompanying the Verbel family in their fight for justice since the killing of Eder Verbel Rocha by paramilitaries in March 2011. On May 30, two men were sentenced to 19 years in prison for the murder. Jeison Pava is the Verbel family's lawyer and Ingrid Vergara has also supported the family in their fight for justice.

On 2 June, three men came to the Verbel family's farm in San Onofre, Sucre Department, and told a young man that he had four hours to leave. On 7 June, **Adolfo Verbel Rocha**, a peasant farmer received a text message threatening to put an end to the Verbel family. The threat explicitly mentioned Adolfo Verbel and his brother **Orlando Verbel**, who is a survivor and witness to the killing of their brother Eder Verbel. The threat, which also mentioned MOVICE, stated that they were monitoring their movements and had police working with them.

On 3 June, **Ingrid Vergara**, a member of the Sucre branch of MOVICE: National Movement of Victims of State Crimes, and **Jeison Pava**, a lawyer from the Permanent Human Rights Committee (CPDH, a part of MOVICE), received a death threat by email: "Ingrid Vergara and Jeison Pava [...] the bodyguards will not be enough for the rain of bullets that will fall on you and your family." The email was also sent to CPDH's general email address and MOVICE staff in Bogotá. Some of the staff in the Bogotá office are in charge of the security and protection of MOVICE members throughout the country.

Over the past five years we have written more than ten letters to Colombian officials because of threats to Ingrid Vergara. Because of our continued concern, we **strongly urge** that you

- guarantee the safety of Adolfo Verbel, Orlando Verbel, Ingrid Vergara, Jeison Pava, their families and other members of MOVICE, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- fulfill your obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

CC: MOVICE ~ via US mail
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 José de Jesús 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 email

UA 147/24_Colombia

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