

Urgent Appeal

To:

Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya
UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

Date: February 6, 2104

From:

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On February 1, 2014, we met with Martha Giraldo in Cali, Colombia. Martha Giraldo directs an organization that seeks justice for victims of extrajudicial killings and is a well-known human rights defender. She received a text message to her personal cell phone on January 31, 2014 in which she was threatened to be killed. Her husband, Jose Milaciades Sanchez, who is the president of a teachers union, also received the same message. Martha has been the target of death threats over the last several years (see attached). Even though the appropriate authorities have been alerted, the perpetrators of the prior death threats have never been brought to justice. She told us that her father was murdered extra-judicially several years ago.

She reported the most recent death threat (which she received last week) to the police but no action has been taken. The text message was not signed and the phone number from which it came does not appear to work. The prior death threats she has received were signed by para-military groups. She has received precautionary measures from the Inter-American Commission (see attached). Together with other organizations, she has written a letter to Colombian government officials (see attached) to which she has received no response. It is not uncommon for human rights defenders in Colombia to receive death threats and in most (if not all) cases the perpetrators are never brought to justice. The death threats to Martha and other human rights defenders are part of a strategy to thwart freedom of expression.

We are writing to request that you initiate a dialogue with the State of Colombia and ask them to investigate these incidents, to bring the perpetrators to justice, and to provide protection for Martha, her husband, and their daughter who is 2 years old.

You can contact Martha directly on her cell phone in Cali +57-3184625971 or by email at movicevalledelcauca@gmail.com.