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Colombia: Death threat against woman human rights defender Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido

On 21 March 2022, women's rights defender **Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido** received a death threat by text message on her mobile phone, while in the company of a lawyer from Corporación SISMA MUJER at a collective reparation event in the department of Bolívar. The threat included the message "we will give you a lead if you continue to defend bitches," as well as other private information about the defender in retaliation for her legitimate work on behalf of women's rights. The threat also used misogynistic language to threaten Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido's mother and the lawyers from [Corporación SISMA MUJER](#) who assist her in her work in the defence of women's rights.

On 25 March 2022, four days after she received the death threat, members of the National Police informed Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido by telephone that her house in the village of El Salado had been set on fire by unknown persons. Fortunately no one was at home and there were only material losses in the fire. Both incidents have been reported to the authorities. Thus far the women's rights defender has not been notified of any progress in the investigation.

[Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido](#) is a women's rights defender from the village of El Salado, in the department of Bolívar, in the Caribbean region of Colombia. In her role as an advocate, she has worked as the legal representative of the Asociación Mujeres Sembrando Vida (Women Sowing Life Association). Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido is a survivor of sexual violence in the El Salado massacre of 2000. Together with other women from the region she has worked on behalf of victims of sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia, not only in criminal investigations but also in collective recognition and reparation actions.

Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido has received death threats periodically since 2019 and has been the victim of stigmatisation that has forced her to move several times to safeguard her life. In 2020 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted precautionary measures in favour of her and her family.

Front Line Defenders condemns the latest threat against the women's rights defender and expresses its deep concern for her physical and emotional well-being, that of her family members and that of her lawyers. The events appear to be directly related to her work in the defence of human rights, in particular the rights of children and women in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia.

Front Line Defenders reiterates its deep concern about the increased attacks against human rights defenders in Colombia, in particular against those promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, women, the environment and the implementation of the peace agreement. The organisation stresses and reiterates that human rights defenders need adequate protection from the national authorities.

Front Line Defenders urges the Colombian authorities to:

1. Conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Yirley Judith Velasco Garrido, her family members and her lawyers with a view to

publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of the women's rights defender, as well as that of her family and her lawyers, in consultation with them;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that women human rights defenders in Colombia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including threats.