

14 September 2016

Colombia: Armed attack and intimidation against human rights defender Rocío Campos from MOVICE

On 6 September 2016, human rights defender Ms **Rocío Campos**, member of the Magdalena Medio chapter of *Movimiento de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado* – MOVICE (Movement of Victims of State Crimes), was attacked in the city of Barrancabermeja by two armed men on a motorcycle, in what appeared to be an assassination attempt.

[MOVICE](#) is a national human rights movement which monitors human rights violations committed by the State in the context of the armed conflict, and calls for State agents and paramilitaries to be brought to justice. The organisation works nationwide with victims of the armed conflict and is made up of “chapters” in several departments in the country. Rocío Campos is the Technical Secretary for Magdalena Medio’s chapter of MOVICE, based in the city of Barrancabermeja.

On 6 September 2016, at approximately 6:30pm, as the human rights defender rode her motorcycle in Barrancabermeja, another motorcycle with two male passengers approached her and pushed the defender off the road. After failing to knock her down, one of the attackers drew a gun and pointed it at Rocío Campos, but fortunately she was able to reach the nearest police station 100 metres away unharmed. Rocío alerted the police officers to the fact that the attackers were close by, but the police officers did not pursue them. The human rights defender was then interrogated, and recommended that she take “great care” while travelling. The police officers refused to escort Rocío Campos home.

This aggression against the human rights defender takes place in a context where grassroots social movements in the city of Barrancabermeja are being [targeted](#) by local paramilitary groups. In a statement published by the Gaitanistas Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) on 25 July 2016, the paramilitary group threatened many organisations that work in the region.

Death threats, attacks and assassinations have been persistent for members of MOVICE since they began their struggle for justice. The movement has been a constant target of [threatening pamphlets](#) circulated by paramilitary groups and has faced intimidation and assassination attempts; as in the case of [Ingrid Vergara](#), Front Line Defender’s Award Finalist in 2016, who was [threatened](#) again as recently as last month. On [13 November 2015](#), one of MOVICE’s members, human rights defender Daniel Abril, was killed.

According to local organisations, since the final peace agreement between the State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was unveiled on 26 August 2016, thirteen grassroots human rights defenders in Antioquia, César, Cauca and Nariño have been assassinated. These deaths, plus others recorded by local non-governmental organisation **Somos Defensores**, amount to the murder of a total of 50 human rights defenders since January 2016.

Front Line Defenders denounces the assassination attempt against defender Rocío Campos and expresses deep concern at the situation facing human rights defenders working with victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. Colombia has embarked on a new path with the signing of this peace accord, but if it is to lead to long-term stability and justice for all Colombians, the active, free and safe participation of human rights defenders in rebuilding the country is critical.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Colombia to:

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1. Strongly condemn the killings of human rights defenders in the country;
2. Condemns the armed attack against human rights defender **Rocio Campos**;
3. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the human rights defender, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of **Rocio Campos** as well as of the members of her family;
4. Take all necessary measures, in consultation with the human rights defenders, to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of **members of MOVICE** as well as of the members of the families;
5. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks against **Rocio Campos**, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
6. Guarantee that in all circumstances all human rights defenders in **Colombia** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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