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## Colombia: new death threats against Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu

On 20 April 2019, defamatory and threatening pamphlets about **Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu** were posted on a fake Facebook profile. Six members of the organisation were named in the threats, including its director [Jakeline Romero](#). The social media attack is part of a wider pattern of harassment against those who denounce human rights violations in the rural territories of Colombia.

The human rights organisation **Sütsuin Jieyuu Wayúu** or Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu (Force of Wayuu Women) was created in 2006 with the aim of visibilising and denouncing violations of the rights of the Wayúu indigenous people, such as forced displacement, resulting from the mining mega-projects, the vulnerability of the victims of the armed conflict, the presence of armed groups and the militarization of the Guajira territory. Historically, Wayuu women have organised in defence of their land, environment and the right to self-determination. Collectively, they have denounced numerous human rights violations committed in La Guajira, acting as crucial actors in the promotion of human rights in the region. Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu has also drawn attention to the disproportionate effects that conflict and displacement have on women, which has fuelled the organisation's efforts towards empowering and capacitating indigenous women.

On 20 April 2019, around 4pm, a fake profile on Facebook named "Pedro Lastra" was used to publish two pamphlets containing threats and defamatory accusations against Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu. One of the pamphlets also mentioned other local movements such as the Movimiento Nación Wayuu, the Organización Wayuu Araurayu and the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia. The second one targeted Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu exclusively, including by threatening the lives of six of its members: Karmen Ramírez, Miguel Ramirez, Jakeline Romero, Deris Paz, Luis Misael Socarras and Dulcy Cotes.

Shortly after, at 9pm, the fake profile was deleted. The pamphlets included the symbol of "Águilas Negras - Bloque Capital D.C.", a paramilitary group active since 2006, who issues threats and promotes attacks against human rights defenders, social leaders and journalists defending land and environmental rights.

On 30 April 2019, Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu published a [statement](#) informing and calling for action on the matter. The pattern of threats against the movement has been [denounced](#) by its members since 2000. The perpetrators have increasingly resorted to targeted misogynistic violence against women human rights defenders, forcing some of them to seek relocation. In 2016, Jakeline Romero was threatened with enforced disappearance. She also received threats of sexual violence against her daughters.

On a number of occasions, the threats made against Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu were flagged to local authorities. However, the state's response, including the protection measures afforded by the National Protection Unit (*Unidad Nacional de Protección*), have not been sufficient to ensure the integral protection of the human rights defenders.

Colombia has seen an increase in violence against human rights defenders since the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. More than two years on, the state has failed to implement most of its obligations, including establishing an integrated presence in rural regions. This has led to a number of illegal armed groups fighting for control of the areas previously occupied by FARC-EP, which puts local human rights defenders at an increased risk.

Front Line Defenders condemns the threats made against the human rights defenders of Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu and expresses concern over the increased risk that they are facing. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the increasing violence against human rights defenders in Colombia, which witnessed more killings of human rights defenders than any other country worldwide in 2018, as stated in the [Global Analysis Report](#) published by the organisation. Front Line Defenders is also concerned about the lack of official recognition of the systematic character of these crimes, which are often carried out with the participation, authorization, support or acquiescence of agents of the state, reinforcing the high levels of impunity for violations against human rights defenders.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Colombia to:**

1. Strongly condemn the online attacks, intimidation and threats against Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu, which are believed to be motivated by their legitimate human rights work;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the online attacks, intimidation and threats against Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Strengthen the efforts to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of members of Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu and their family members, as well as all Wayuu indigenous persons, in consultation with them;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that 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.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 9: “3. 5. *The State shall conduct a prompt and impartial investigation or ensure that an inquiry takes place whenever there is reasonable ground to believe that a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms has occurred in any territory under its jurisdiction*”, and to Article 12 (2): “*The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure*

*the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.”*

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



**Andrew Anderson**  
Executive Director