

tense and antagonistic. But even the most hostile military commanders would be disorientated and 'disarmed' by Marta's deceptively naive direct line of questioning and instead of turning into a shouting match, Marta's approach often elicited valuable information, and even a cup of coffee.

Marta's deep knowledge of Colombia garnered through her many and extensive visits to the country, often accompanied by AI colleagues from AI Netherlands and AI Spain, led to a strong network within the AI movement which thanks to the detailed knowledge of the country and the situation, was able to lead the AI membership in targeted action, effectively lobbying governments and the international community to take action to pressure the Colombian authorities to halt the abuses and to support survivors of human rights violations, many of whom had to leave the country for their protection.

And indeed Marta's most enduring legacy in Colombia will undoubtedly be the programme of relief assistance she established and developed in order to safeguard Colombians most at risk of serious human rights abuse. The programme, which Marta effectively and diligently led with AI Switzerland, undoubtedly saved scores of lives and gave hope and support to many others. Very few people other than Marta would have been able to establish the necessary trust and cooperation across a range of partner organizations and donors, but Marta did and conscientiously maintained the programme for many years.

Marta was the epitome of a human rights defender: dedicated, determined generous and compassionate. She will be sorely missed by so many.

Susan Lee

Former Americas Director, Amnesty International

London, April 2024

*You can shed tears that she is gone*

*Or you can smile because she has lived*

*You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back*

*Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left*

*(D Harkins)*

+ The Latin American Federation of Associations for Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (FEDEFAM) is a nongovernmental organization formed by associations of relatives of the disappeared in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which have or are currently practicing forced disappearance.