

UA 141/00

Fear for Safety

31 May 2000

COLOMBIA            Jineth BEDOYA LIMA (f) ]     Journalists for Colombian  
                         Ignacio GOMEZ GOMEZ     ]     newspaper *El Espectador*  
                         Three other journalists

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Journalist Jineth Bedoya was abducted and tortured by paramilitaries, who told her repeatedly of a *lista negra*, death list, of journalists they had sentenced to death, including her and four of her colleagues. People named on such death lists are frequently attacked in Colombia, and Amnesty International is concerned that those responsible may be planning a campaign of terror against other journalists.

On the evening of 24 May a man telephoned Jineth Bedoya claiming to represent imprisoned paramilitaries who wanted to meet with her. The following day she went to meet the man at the *La Modelo* prison in the capital, Bogotá. As she waited for an entry ticket a man approached her, who asked her who she was and then at gunpoint took her to a nearby house where she was gagged, bound, beaten, psychologically and physically tortured and physically ill-treated. The men beat her as they took her in a car to the outskirts of the city of Villavicencio, three hours' drive from Bogotá, and abandoned her there some 10 hours after she had been abducted.

As a legal affairs reporter for the newspaper *El Espectador*, Jineth Bedoya had covered a 27 April riot involving paramilitary prisoners at the *La Modelo* prison, in which some two dozen people were killed. Paramilitaries objected to her coverage of the gun battle, and sent death threats attached to copies of her articles to the offices of *El Espectador*.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two hundred journalists have been assassinated in the Americas since 1988, 89 of them in Colombia, according to the *Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa* (SIP), Inter-American Press Society.

More than 30,000 civilians have died in the last 10 years, as the conflict between the Colombian armed forces and their paramilitary allies and left-wing armed opposition groups has intensified. In 1998 Andrés Pastrana's government began peace negotiations with the two major armed opposition groups, but the violence has continued to escalate.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing grave concern that Jineth Bedoya Lima, Ignacio Gomez Gomez and three other journalists are reportedly named on a death list;
- urging the government to take immediate steps to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the death threats, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- deploring the apparent abduction by paramilitaries of reporter Jineth Bedoya and calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation, for the results to be made public and for all those responsible to be brought to justice.

#### APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**  
**Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351**  
**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Pastrana**

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Humberto de la Calle, Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO**  
**Fax: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5884 / 342 3201**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,  
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,  
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Faxes: + 571 570 2022 (If the call is answered, say "Fax, por favor"**  
**and wait for the signal.)**  
**Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr. Gómez**

**COPIES TO:**

Newspaper  
*El Espectador*  
Avenida 68 N° 23-71  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Faxes: + 57 1 260 23 23**

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 July 2000.