

UA 15/99

Fear for safety

25 January 1999

COLOMBIA Carlos Ulloa, Stella Guerra - human rights workers with the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace
Members of the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo* (AFAVIT), Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo.

There is serious concern for the safety of human rights workers Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra, after a death threat was reportedly made against them by a man linked to paramilitary groups operating in the area. The two are members of the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz* in the municipality of Trujillo, Valle del Cauca Department. The threat has also raised concern for the safety of those working with the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo* (AFAVIT), Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo, an organization which the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz* supports.

On 18 January 1999, a known informer for paramilitary groups and the security forces came to the building which houses the offices of AFAVIT and the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, to intimidate human rights workers by openly spying on them. Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra live in the building. He reportedly said, "that pair of sons of bitches upstairs are guerrillas, the same is going to be done to them as was done to the others eight years ago" (*ese par de hijos de putas de arriba son guerrilleros, que se les va a hacer lo mismo que a los otros, hace ocho años*) - a clear reference to the "disappearances" and extrajudicial killings of civilians by paramilitary groups and the security forces in Trujillo in 1990, which the man who made the threat reportedly took part in.

This is the latest act in an escalating campaign of harassment and intimidation against members of AFAVIT and the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, human rights organizations which have been prominent in the continuing search for justice in the Trujillo cases.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1989 and 1990 the security forces, working with paramilitary groups, were responsible for the extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" of over 100 peasant farmers in the region around Trujillo. AFAVIT, supported closely by the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, have campaigned tirelessly for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, for the whereabouts of the "disappeared" to be established and for the victims' relatives to receive compensation. Amnesty International and other national and international human rights organizations have also been campaigning on these cases.

The Colombian President publicly acknowledged the state's responsibility for the crimes at Trujillo in 1995, after they had been investigated by an independent commission, under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR). However, in spite of this acknowledgement, those responsible have never been brought to justice, the whereabouts of the "disappeared" established or the relatives of the victims fully compensated. Witnesses to the killings have been subject to a systematic campaign of persecution. Some have been killed and several others have had to flee the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra, human rights workers with the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz* in Trujillo who received a death threat on 18 January 1999;
- expressing concern for members of the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo* (AFAVIT) and all those working on the Trujillo cases;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by those at risk to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the campaign of harassment and intimidation of human rights workers in Trujillo and particularly the death threat made against Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the civilian, police and military authorities and paramilitary forces operating in the region;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments;
- urging the Colombian Government to respect its commitments to the IACHR to bring to justice those responsible for the killings in Trujillo and adequately compensate relatives of the victims;
- reminding the government of Colombia of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

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
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence, Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior, Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO
Fax: + 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405 / 286 0053 / 341 9739

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
Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.

COPIES TO: Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, Santafé de Bogotá,
Colombia

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 8 March 1999.