

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/04/92

Distr: UA/SC

4 February 1992

Further information on UA 335/91 (AMR 23/57/91, 10 October 1991) - Prisoner of Conscience (please note change of concern)

COLOMBIA: Edwar ALVAREZ VACCA, aged 20, human rights activist

Amnesty International is concerned at reports of the detention of Edwar Alvarez Vacca, member of the Equipo Coordinadora para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de Ocaña, Coordinating Team for the Defense of Human Rights in Ocaña, on 31 January 1991 and believes that he may be a prisoner of conscience.

According to a sworn testimony given by Edwar Alvarez to the personería, ombudsman, of Convención, Norte de Santander department on 1 February, he was travelling in a car with several other people when they were stopped by a military patrol from the army base of La Esmeralda, just outside the town of Convención. Their identity documents were taken to the base and they were searched. The soldiers who had taken his papers asked Edwar Alvarez whether he was the same Edwar Alvarez who was a defender of human rights, which he affirmed. He was then taken to the army base with two others. He states that they were searched again and interrogated by an army officer, who reportedly said to him that the Coordinating Team for the Defense of Human Rights in Ocaña was a front for left-wing political groups and demanded the names of the other members of the Coordinating Team. The men were later taken to the police station in Convención. The same day, a judge came to the police station to take their statements and informed them that they were charged with membership of the armed opposition group Ejército de Liberación Nacional, (ELN), National Liberation Army.

Edwar Alvarez has been actively involved in community and human rights work for a number of years and has been the victim of threats and harassment as a result. In August 1991, the Coordinating Team of Human Rights in Ocaña organized a regional human rights forum in Ocaña which was attended by more than a thousand people, mainly from the surrounding area. Shortly after the forum, the Coordinating Team received an anonymous threat accusing them of being a front for the ELN and saying that they would pay heavily if they did not stop using the Human Rights Coordinating Team for this purpose. Edwar Alvarez believes that he has been detained solely for his human rights work "*estar privado de nuestra libertad por la única razón de ser defensores de nuestras comunidades y de derechos humanos ...*" "the sole reason for our being deprived of our freedom is for our defense of our communities and of human rights". Amnesty International believes Edwar Alvarez is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely on account of his peaceful human rights activities.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that Edwar Alvarez be immediately and unconditionally released on the grounds that he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely on account of his peaceful human rights activities;

- urging that he be humanely treated while in detention;

- requesting that he be allowed full access to family and lawyers.

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APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066

+ 57 1 286 7324

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Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /

Dear President Gaviria

2) Advocate for the People:

Dr Jaime Córdoba Triviño

Defensor del Pueblo

Procuraduría General

Edificio Banco Ganadero

Carrera 5, No. 15-80

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, c/o Procuraduria General, Santa Fe de Baogta, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PREGN CO OR 41213 pgndp CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

Estimado Dr. Triviño /

Dear Dr. Triviño

3) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla

Procurador General de la Nación

Procuraduría General

Edificio Banco Ganadero

Carrera 5, No. 15-80

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

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Sr. Procurador General de la Nación /

Dear Dr. Arrieta

4) Commander of La Esmeralda Military Base:

Tte Coronel Jorge García Cortes

Comandante Batallón No. 18 Jaime Rook

Base Militar La Esmeralda

Municipio de Convención

Norte de Santander

Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Base Militar La Esmeralda, Convencion, Norte de Santander, Colombia

COPIES TO:

Equipo Coordinadora para la Defensa
de los Derechos Humanos de Ocaña
AA 52
Ocaña
Norte de Santander
COLOMBIA

Association for the relatives of the
"disappeared":
Señores
ASFADDES
AA 011446
Santa Fe de Bogotá
COLOMBIA

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 March 1992.