

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/019/2001

14 February 2001

Further information on UA 38/01 (AMR 23/017/2001, 9 February 2001) - Fear for Safety / Death Threats

COLOMBIA **Peace Brigades International**
Human rights activists with the *Organización Femenina*
Popular (OFP)

Identity documents and mobile telephones confiscated by paramilitaries have been returned following international appeals. However, Amnesty International is still seriously concerned for the safety of those working for the *Organización Femenina Popular (OFP)*, Popular Women's Organization, and other human rights organizations in Barrancabermeja following renewed threats.

In the afternoon of 9 February, an unidentified man came to the OFP offices in southeastern Barrancabermeja and handed over a parcel containing the identity documents and telephones that had been stolen the previous day. He said that the parcel had been given to him by some men, who told him to deliver it to OFP.

A few hours after the parcel was delivered two men approached two PBI volunteers accompanying members of the OFP and said that the events of the previous day had been a mistake and apologized for what had happened. A regional newspaper, *The Vanguardia Liberal*, has reported that paramilitary leaders with the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)*, United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia, deny having threatened OFP or PBI.

However, human rights organizations in Barrancabermeja continue to be under serious threat, and their members continue to be intimidated. For example, before the confiscated items were returned on the morning of 9 February, unidentified gunmen wearing plain clothes reportedly verbally abused and threatened a man who was delivering building supplies to the OFP. Shortly afterwards, OFP president Yolanda Becerra received an anonymous telephone call in which the caller ordered her to "attend a meeting with the paramilitary commander 'El Cabo'" ("*asistir a una cita con el comandante paramilitar alias 'El Cabo'*"). OFP has been ordered to attend meetings with the paramilitaries on several occasions in recent months, but have refused.

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

- expressing concern about renewed intimidation of the OFP;
- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of activists with the *Organización Femenina Popular* and Peace Brigades International;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation to be carried out into the threats, with those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern that even though a much publicized special forces unit was recently sent into Barrancabermeja, ostensibly to combat paramilitary forces, no decisive action has been taken against paramilitary forces in the city, whose whereabouts have been reported to the authorities;
- reminding the Colombian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in United Nations (UN) and Organization of American States (OAS) declarations, and urging it to adhere to repeated recommendations made by the UN to the Colombian government to take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Vice-President of the Republic

Señor Vicepresidente Gustavo Bell Lemus
 Alto Consejero Presidencial para asuntos de Derechos Humanos y lucha Contra
 la Corrupción
 Cra. 8 #7-26, Palacio de Nariño,
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 337 1350 / 337 1351

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente / Dear Vice-President

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Governor of Santander Department

Gobernador del Departamento de Santander
 Sr. Jorge Eliecer Gómez Villamizar
 Gobernación de Santander
 Calle 37, No. 10-30
 Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Faxes: +57 76 339889

Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:Women's grassroots organization

Organización Femenina Popular
 Cra 22 No 52B - 36
 Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 28 March 2001.