

PUBLIC

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Fear for

COLOMBIAJhon Fredy Restrepo Arango, businessman

Businessman Jhon Fredy Restrepo Arango has not been seen since 28 March, when he left his hotel in Bucaramanga, capital of the northeastern department of Santander. He had received death threats before, and it is feared that he may have "disappeared".

He left the hotel at about 4pm, heading for the bus station. He had planned to travel to Medellín to visit his one-year-old son, who was ill. He never arrived at the bus station.

In late 1999 an armed group had demanded "protection money" from Jhon Fredy's business, in Medellín. He moved to Cúcuta, in Norte de Santander department, to escape death threats from the group, which is believed to have links with paramilitary death squads.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jhon Fredy's brother, Nelson Restrepo Arango, is a well-known human rights activist. He worked in the human rights program of the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (Popular Training Institute) in Medellín until the end of last year, when death threats forced him to leave the country.

The Colombian armed forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. In the last five years several thousand civilians have been killed or "disappeared" at the hands of paramilitary groups, who continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country despite the government making it illegal to set up paramilitary organizations, and issuing directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989. Guerrilla forces have also committed serious human rights abuses, including executions of people they accuse of collaborating with the security forces or paramilitaries.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jhon Fredy Restrepo Arango, who was last seen on 28 March in the city of Bucaramanga;
- calling for an immediate, full and impartial investigation to establish his whereabouts.

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

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 2186/289 3377

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 1351

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

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

Fax: + 57 76 339889

Salutation: Dear Sir/Estimado Sr. Gobernador

Police Force of Santander
General José Páez Guerra
Policía Nacional de Santander
Calle 4 No. 11-44, Barrio Alfonso López
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 333303/337789

Salutation: Dear General/Estimado General

COPIES TO:

Centro Internacional para la Promoción, Protección e Investigación de Derechos Humanos en Colombia
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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 18 May 2001.