

UA 158/00

"Disappea

COLOMBIA **Gilberto AGUDELO MARTÍNEZ - Trade Unionist**
Workers and students of the National University in Antioquia

Gilberto Agudelo Martínez, president of a university workers' trade union, "disappeared" about two weeks ago while he was traveling on union business. Paramilitaries have reportedly claimed responsibility. Staff and students at the university he works at are believed to be in danger.

Gilberto Agudelo Martínez, who works at the National University in Medellín, Antioquia Department, is the National President of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados Universitarios de Colombia* (SINTRAUNICOL), Colombian University Workers and Employees Union. He is also a leader of the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Trade Union Confederation. When he "disappeared" he was on his way from the capital, Bogotá, to Bucaramanga, Santander department.

Last year pamphlets threatening a paramilitary offensive against the National University were distributed on its campuses at Bogotá and Medellín. Since then a student has been killed, as has a professor. Gunmen attempted to kill university professor Eduardo Pizarro, who was shot several times but survived, in December 1999.

According to the *Federación Colombiana de Educadores* (FECODE), Colombian Federation of Educators, and the *Federación Nacional de Profesores Universitarios*, National Federation of University Professors, 15 teachers have been killed so far this year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years the security and armed forces and their paramilitary allies have accused trade unionists, human rights workers, members of legal opposition groups and popular activists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. The people they have accused have frequently been harassed, tortured and killed, often by paramilitaries. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions Annual Survey for 1999 recorded that during the previous year more than 90 trade unionists had been murdered in Colombia.

Amnesty International has documented systematic persecution of trade unionists in Colombia. Seven trade union leaders were shot dead during the 1998 national strike, including CUT vice-president Jorge Ortega Garcia (see UA 274/98, AMR 23/80/98, 21 October 1998, and follow up, AMR 23/90/98, 24 November 1998). None of these crimes has been resolved and those responsible have not been brought to justice.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Gilberto Agudelo Martínez, National President of SINTRAUNICOL, who has not been seen in two weeks;
- urging a full and impartial investigation to establish his whereabouts, and that, if in detention, efforts should be made to ensure his immediate release;
- urging that those responsible for his apparent abduction are brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of workers and students of the National University in Antioquia;
- urging the authorities to take all measures deemed necessary by those at risk to guarantee their safety;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Santander, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

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
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 2186/289 3377
Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr Presidente

Minister of Interior

Señor Humberto De La Calle
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Palacio Echeverry
Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o., Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 286 8025
Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Governor of the Antioquia Department

Dr. Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia
Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Telegrams: Gobernador de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia
Fax: + 574 381 1342
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Sindicato de Trabajadores y Empleados Universitarios de Colombia (SINTRAUNICOL)
Universidad de Antioquia Bloque 6-135, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Trade Union Confederation

Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT)
Apartado Aéreo 221, 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 25 July 2000.