

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/078/2001

9 August 2001

Further information on 198/01 (AMR 23/074/2001, 2 August 2001) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA                      **Members of the human rights organization *Corporación SEMBRAR***

---

Members of the Bogotá-based human rights organization *Corporación SEMBRAR* have received further death threats, apparently from army-backed paramilitaries. The threats are believed to relate to the organization's activities in and around Barrancabermeja where paramilitary forces are waging a military campaign for control of the area.

An anonymous telephone call was made to *SEMBRAR*'s office in the capital, Bogotá, on 8 August. The caller reportedly threatened to kill members of the organization and said "*Si pasan lo pagan*", "If they get through you'll pay for it".

It is believed that the caller was referring to the delivery of humanitarian aid by the *Caravana Internacional por la Vida* ("International Caravan for Life"). *SEMBRAR* helped to organize the delivery to the civilian communities in the south of the Bolívar department, near Barrancabermeja, who are suffering serious hardship because of the armed conflict in the region.

On the same day, three men reportedly kept *SEMBRAR*'s office in Bogotá under surveillance. *Sembrar* workers telephoned the police, who arrested one of the men, who was reported to be armed. The man allegedly returned to the building after being released and threatened the security guards saying "*No saben en lo que se están metiendo*", "You don't know what you're getting involved in".

The security forces and their paramilitary allies are engaged in a large-scale offensive against the guerrilla organizations *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army, and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in the south of Bolívar region. They have accused civilian communities in the region of being guerrilla collaborators or supporters. Paramilitary forces have been responsible for serious human rights violations, including killings and "disappearances", with the support and acquiescence of the security forces.

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

- urging the Colombian authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of *Corporación SEMBRAR* members so they can continue their legitimate work for the defence and promotion of human rights;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the death threats on 8 August and the surveillance of people entering and leaving the *SEMBRAR*'s office, asking for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the Colombian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders as laid out in United Nations (UN) and Organisation of American States (OAS) declarations, and in line with repeated

recommendations made by the UN to the Colombian government to take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;

- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite their own commitments and UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups;
- 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 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

**Telegram: Presidente, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 336 2109 / 337 1351**

**Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente**

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell Lemus  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: +57 1 222 0059**

**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

**Telegrams: Gobernador, Santander, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 57 76 339889**

**Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador**

**COPIES TO:**

National non-governmental human rights organization

SEMBRAR

Apartado Aéreo 34692  
 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 21 September 2001.