

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/82/00

UA 313/00

Fear for Safety

10 October

COLOMBIAN Nelson Restrepo]
Ignacio Arango]
Juan Carlos Muñoz] human rights defenders
Fredy Vélez]
Wilfer Bonilla]

Other human rights defenders in Medellín, Antioquia.

Five human rights activists are in immediate danger after they were declared "military targets" by a paramilitary group in telephone threats. The threats were made only days after two other human rights defenders were abducted in the same area.

In the morning of 9 October, three phone calls were made to the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, in Medellín, capital of Antioquia Department, declaring Nelson Restrepo, Ignacio Arango, Juan Carlos Muñoz, Fredy Vélez and Wilfer Bonilla to be "military targets". The callers identified themselves as members of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia.

The IPC is an long-established and internationally respected non-governmental human rights organization specializing in research, popular education and peace promotion. Nelson Restrepo, Ignacio Arango, Juan Carlos Muñoz and Fredy Vélez work on the IPC human rights programme. Wilfer Bonilla worked on the IPC youth programme until a month ago.

The IPC has previously been targeted by paramilitaries. In August 1999 a bomb exploded outside the IPC office, causing serious damage to it and surrounding buildings (see UA 227/99, AMR 23/62/99, 31 August 1999). The bomb attack came only days after AUC leaders were formally charged with abducting four IPC workers. (see EXTRA 12/99, AMR 23/04/99, 29 January 1999, and follow-ups).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years, the security and armed forces have accused human rights workers and other civil society activists in Colombia of being guerrilla sympathizers. In recent years, the security forces and their paramilitary allies have increasingly targeted human rights activists. As a result, they have frequently been subjected to human rights violations, and have received repeated death threats.

In Medellín, the security situation has become a cause for concern as a number of human rights organizations have been targeted. On 6 October Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve were reportedly abducted by gunmen after leaving work at the Medellín branch of the human rights organization ASFADDES. Their whereabouts are still unknown. (see Further information on UA 259/00, AMR 23/81/00, 9 October 2000). Martha Soto, another ASFADDES worker, received a telephone death threat on 13 April. (see UA 91/00, AMR 23/24/00, 20 April 2000).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the IPC workers named above after they were declared "military targets" in telephoned threats on 9 October;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the threats, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective steps to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders in Medellín, reminding the Colombian government of its obligations to protect human rights defenders, as set out by the United Nations and the Organization of American States;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Medellín and the surrounding area, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

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

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

Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 286 8025 / 284 0214

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Minister of Foreign Relations

Dr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Palacio San Carlos
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 45209 MRRE CO

Faxes: + 57 1 282 5802 / 341 6777

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

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

Faxes: + 57 4 381 1342

Salutation: Dear Governor/ Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), Apartado Aéreo 9690, Medellín, Antioquia, 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 November 2000.