

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/128/2001

19 December 2001

Further information on UA 302/00 (AMR 23/79/00, 28 September 2000) and follow-up (AMR 23/054/2001, 31 May 2001) - Fear for safety/extrajudicial executions

COLOMBIA Leaders of SINTRAEMCALI and other trade unions in Valle del Cauca department

New names: Rubén Darío González (m)
Aydé Casilimas (m)
Larry López (m)

Leaders of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de las Empresas Municipales de Cali* (SINTRAEMCALI), Cali Trade Union of Municipal Service Workers have been followed and threatened by a man with possible links to paramilitaries. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety, and that of other trade unionists in Cali, Valle del Cauca department.

On 15 December at 4pm, SINTRAEMCALI leader Rubén Darío González, the trade union's human rights adviser Aydé Casilimas and their bodyguard Larry López, a member of the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS), Civilian Intelligence Service, were travelling through Cali when they noticed a motorcyclist following their car closely. They tried to shake him off, and in the Petecuy district he crashed while trying to follow them round a sharp corner. They stopped in front of the motorcycle, and Larry López detained the rider. Whilst they waited for the police, the rider reportedly asked them: "Ustedes que prefieren a los paramilitares o a la guerrilla? Yo prefiero a los paramilitares", "Who do you prefer, the paramilitaries or the guerrillas? I prefer the paramilitaries". The police arrested the motorcyclist, but later released him.

SINTRAEMCALI trade union activists have received repeated paramilitary death threats and been victim of serious human rights violations in the last two years. In May two members of the union were killed by unidentified gunmen. Nobody is known to have been brought to justice for these killings, leaving SINTRAEMCALI at risk of further attack.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The security forces and their paramilitary allies have frequently accused trade unionists of being guerrillas collaborators, and followed up these accusations with serious human rights violations. At least 150 trade unionists have been killed so far this year, the majority by army-backed paramilitaries. A senior trade union leader, Wilson Borja Díaz, fled the country in December 2000 after he was shot and wounded by gunmen. Judicial investigations have linked the attack to several active and retired police officers (See UA 387/00, AMR 23/104/2000, 21 December 2000).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of trade union leaders and activists with the SINTRAEMCALI union;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk,
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into previous human rights violations against members of the trade union with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Valle del Cauca Department, and asking that the results of the investigation 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 recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:President of Colombia

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

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71/286 7434/286 6842/284 2186

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Oficina 217, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 18 74/ 00 59/1874

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,

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

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 5298/ 562 9890/ 286 8025

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

National Human Rights Ombudsman

Defensor del Pueblo

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46

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 20 January 2002.