

COLOMBIA Members of *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, (SINALTRAINAL), National Union of Food Industry Workers*

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the *Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, (SINALTRAINAL), National Union of Food Industry Workers*, after shots were fired at its headquarters in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department on 14 February.

An unidentified gunman reportedly shot at the third floor of the SINALTRAINAL headquarters from outside the building. Four SINALTRAINAL members on the third floor, had to take cover but were not injured as a result of the shooting. No arrests have been made, despite the fact that the police were reportedly immediately notified and a patrol car was sent to search for the gunman and another unidentified man seen with him.

The attempt at the SINALTRAINAL headquarters comes at a time when the trade union is reportedly preparing a law suit in the United States regarding alleged human rights violations by paramilitaries against SINALTRAINAL trade unionists working in bottling plants contracted by the Coca-Cola Company. The attack also follows threats against and killings of other trade unionists, trade union activists and their families by army-backed paramilitaries in Cali (see UA 53/02, AMR 23/021/02, 18 February 2002).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The security and armed forces and their paramilitary allies have often 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 (ICFTU) recorded that in 2001 alone, over 160 trade unionists were murdered, and that harassment and violence is widespread. According to reports from the Colombian Trade Union Confederation (CUT), so far this year at least 20 trade unionists have been killed.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of SINALTRAINAL members in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the shooting at the union's headquarters in Cali, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk, and calling for the Ministry of Interior's protection program for trade unionists to be adequately resourced;
- 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:

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 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Minister Estrada Villa / Sr. Ministro Estrada Villa

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,
Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 691 5455 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz

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

Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 562 8930

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

COPIES 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 8 April 2002.