

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

15 July 2002

COLOMBIA

Rodrigo Acevedo (m), Human Rights officer
Other members of Sindicato de la Electricidad de Colombia (SINTRAELECOL), Colombian
Electricity Trade Union

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Rodrigo Acevedo, Human Rights officer at the Sindicato de la Electricidad de Colombia (SINTRAELECOL), Colombian Electricity Trade Union and other members of the union, following a reported attempt on his life.

At 11:45am on 8 July, Rodrigo Acevedo was in his office at the SINTRAELECOL central office in Bogotá, when a bullet was fired at the window of the office next to where he was working. The bullet was stopped by the bullet-proof windows.

This is the second time Rodrigo Acevedo has been targeted in recent months. On 24 June he was attacked during his lunch break, when he was assaulted and insulted by armed men in the street.

He informed the *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*, (DAS), Department of Administrative Security (Colombian civilian intelligence service) of the incident. He has also sent a letter to the Interior Ministry protection program for trade unionists, informing them of his case and seeking more effective protection measures.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Trade unionists have frequently been harassed, tortured and killed by paramilitaries who together with the security and armed forces have often accused them of being guerrilla sympathizers. Members of SINTRAELECOL have reportedly been threatened by people, believed to be members of army-backed paramilitary groups, who according to reports, have threatened to kill one trade unionist for every electric tower destroyed by guerrilla groups. According to information from SINTRAELECOL, in the past two years an average of one trade unionist from the Nariño section of the trade union has been killed every month.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) recorded that in 2001 alone, more than 160 trade unionists were murdered, and that harassment and violence is widespread. According to reports from the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Colombian Trade Union Confederation, so far this year some 89 trade unionists have been killed the majority by army-backed paramilitaries.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Rodrigo Acevedo and other members of SINTRAELECOL;
- 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 in order to take effective measures;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attempt against Rodrigo Acevedo, 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, for the results to be made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be 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 United Nations (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

Telegram: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 334 1323

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

(NB: Andrés Pastrana is the President until 7 August when President-elect Dr. Alvaro Uribe takes office.)

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 / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite)

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 / 2017 (if someone answers say “me da tono de fax por favor”)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Trade Union Confederation

Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia

Calle 35 N° 7-25, Piso 9 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 26 August 2002.