

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/061/2001

8 June 2001

Further information on UA 22/01 (AMR 23/008/2001, 29 January 2001) and follow-ups (AMR 23/028/2001, 8 March 2001 and AMR 23/035/01, 26 March 2001) - Fear For safety

COLOMBIA Activists with the Popular Women's Organization (OFP) in the department of Santander
Pablo Javier Arenales, human rights defender

New name: Dany RADA JIMENEZ (f), aged 22

Army-backed paramilitaries have reportedly threatened to kill members of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization, and told at least one of them that she is a "military target". They and other human rights workers in the region are in grave danger.

On 18 May paramilitaries told OFP worker Dany Rada that she was a "military target". Since then she has received further death threats, and the paramilitaries reportedly told community members in various districts of Puerto Wilches, in Santander department, that they will kill more OFP members.

Dany Rada, who works in the municipality of Puerto Wilches, has reportedly been kept under constant surveillance by men following her in the street for the last few weeks. She reported all this to the police. On 3 June a paramilitary reportedly stopped one of her family in the street and told him: "That bitch keeps getting into trouble with us. We warned her not to complain [to the police] and she did. I have a copy of the statement she gave to the Puerto Wilches police." ("*Esa vieja se sigue metiendo en problemas con nosotros. Le advertimos que no denunciara y lo hizo. Yo tengo copia de la declaración que ella hizo ante la policía de Puerto Wilches.*") The man apparently claimed that a police officer had given him a copy of the statement.

Paramilitaries have been warning people living in Puerto Wilches that the women's centres run by the OFP in Puerto Wilches are under threat ("*La Casa de la Mujer está amenazada*") and warning that "We may plant a bomb... The OFP must be finished off" ("*Es posible que colocaremos una bomba... La OFP se acaba por que se acaba.*"). In the past few months paramilitaries have tried to undermine the OFP by telling local people in Santander that they are planning to attack the organization so that they are too frightened to support it.

There is no further news of Pablo Javier Arenales, who works with the *Corporación Regional de Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation.

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

- expressing concern that army-backed paramilitaries have again intimidated and threatened workers of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), and urging the Colombian authorities to take action to protect all OFP human rights activists, in line with formal requests by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights;
- asking them to order an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the threats, and bring those responsible to justice;
- reminding the government of its obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in United Nations (UN) and Organization of American States

declarations, and urging it to follow repeated UN recommendations to take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Barrancabermeja and the surrounding area, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be 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

Fax: + 57 1 336 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 de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 1874

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

Faxes: + 57 76 339889

Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Women's grassroots organization

Organización Femenina Popular

Cra 22 No 52B - 36

Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 July 2001.