

EXTRA 12/99

Fear for safety / "Disappearance"

29 January 1999

COLOMBIA Jairo Bedoya, director of the, *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, a non-governmental human rights organization.

Olga Rodas (f), IPC administrator

Jorge Salazar, IPC human rights program coordinator

Claudia Tamayo (f), IPC development coordinator

The four human rights defenders named above have been forcibly abducted and "disappeared" by armed men, believed to be paramilitaries. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety.

According to reports, Jairo Bedoya, Olga Rodas, Jorge Salazar and Claudia Tamayo were abducted on 28 January 1999 from the offices of the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, in Medellín, capital of Antioquia Department.

The IPC is a long established and internationally respected non-governmental human rights organization specializing in research, popular education and peace promotion.

Although the armed gang identified themselves as "*milicianos*" (members of urban militias linked to guerrilla forces), they accused those present of being "*simpatizantes de la guerrilla*" (guerrilla sympathizers). They also said "*la guerrilla no va a pasar*" (the guerrillas are not going to get through) and that they were not going to "*permitir el avance del comunismo*" (permit the advance of communism) - thereby revealing their possible links to a paramilitary organization.

The armed gang made all those present in the offices (around 25) lie on the floor and, using a list of names, selected the four named above. They stated that they were taking them because they needed to "*aclarar algunos asuntos relacionados con milicias*" (clear up some subjects relating to urban militias). They also took several computers, containing IPC records.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years a number of human rights organizations have been targeted by the security forces and their paramilitary allies, resulting in serious human rights violations.

Human rights and popular organizations which work in poor neighbourhoods and communities of people forcibly displaced by political violence are frequently labelled guerrilla collaborators or supporters by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. These organizations are thus presented as legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war.

In 1997 Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado of the *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP), Centre for Research and Popular Education, were shot dead in their home (see UA 146/97, AMR 23/31/97, 20 May 1997 and follow ups). Carlos Castaño, a national paramilitary leader implicated in the crime remains at large despite outstanding warrants for his arrest.

In 1998 the security forces made an illegal raid on the offices of the *Comisión Interncongregacional de Justicia y Paz* (CIJP), Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace, after military intelligence issued a report alleging

the CIJP had information relating to an urban guerrilla network (See UA 151/98, AMR 23/31/98, 15 May 1998).

Also in 1998, two prominent human rights workers were murdered. Jesús María Valle Jaramillo was shot dead in his office in Medellín after denouncing links between military and paramilitary organizations (UA 62/98, AMR 23/12/98, 2 March 1998) and Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, a renowned human rights lawyer, was killed in Bogotá, reportedly in retaliation for defending trade union leaders facing charges of supporting the armed opposition (UA 122/98, AMR 23/22/98, 20 April 1998).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jairo Bedoya, Olga Rodas, Jorge Salazar and Claudia Tamayo, all of them members of the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), who were forcibly abducted by presumed members of a paramilitary group on 28 January 1999;
- urging authorities to take immediate steps to establish their whereabouts, guarantee their physical integrity and secure their immediate release;
- urging the authorities to take all measures, deemed appropriate by other IPC workers, to guarantee their safety;
- calling on the authorities to investigate promptly, fully and impartially the abductions and "disappearances", to make the results of the investigation public and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging the authorities to adhere to their commitments to dismantle paramilitary groups and to effectively prosecute all members of the security forces with links to such 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

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence, Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior, Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No. 8-09, Piso 2, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405 / 286 0053 / 341 9739

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación, Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2022

Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.

COPIES TO: Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), Apartado Aéreo 9690,
Medellín, Antioquía, 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 4 March 1999.