

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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"Disappearance" / Death threats

13 June 1995

COLOMBIA

Henry de Jesús Rendón, civic leader
Luz Elena Ciro (f)
Jorge Enrique Villegas

Henry de Jesús Rendón, leading member of the civic movement *Unidos para el Progreso*, United for Progress, has not been seen since 31 May 1995, when he was forcibly abducted by two armed men. Since then, two other members of *Unidos para el Progreso*, Luz Elena Ciro and Jorge Enrique Villegas, have reportedly received telephone death threats.

According to information received, Henry de Jesús Rendón was abducted by the two men in the municipality of Puerto Nare, Antioquia department. The men repeatedly beat him on the back of the head and forced him into an unmarked red and white car. Several hours later the car was found in *La India* farm, Puerto Nare. The car, which had apparently been washed, was found with bloodstains. A pair of shorts and a pair of glasses which were reportedly identified as belonging to Henry de Jesús Rendón were found inside the car.

The area where Henry de Jesús was abducted is close to a police station and a military base. Despite there seems to have been no attempt to prevent the abduction or pursue the two armed men. His "disappearance" has been officially denounced to the Colombian authorities.

Henry de Jesús is well-known as a civic leader working for *Unidos para el Progreso*, and on 13 May was elected as the municipal treasurer. On 26 May he was reportedly threatened in a bar in Puerto Nare by a member of a paramilitary group operating in the region. The fact that he was then abducted raises serious fears for the safety of the others now threatened.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has made repeated promises, both during his election campaign and since taking office, to improve the human rights situation. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces.

These pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious violations with virtual impunity. Civilians, including civic activists, political activists and trade unionists, have frequently been the victim of such violations.

Many paramilitary groups have their origins in the civilian "self-defence" squads which the army created in the 1980s to act as auxiliaries during counter-insurgency operations. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the Colombian armed forces to combat and disband such groups, paramilitary forces have continued to kill and "disappear" perceived opponents with impunity. In many areas of the country paramilitary forces have continued to work with the support of the security forces.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Henry de Jesús Rendón who has not been seen since his abduction on 31 May 1995;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation to establish his whereabouts, the results of which should be made public;
- urging that if he is in detention, he be treated humanely, granted access to lawyers and relatives, and charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence or released;
- expressing concern for the safety of Luz Elena Ciro and Jorge Enrique Villegas and other members of the *Unidos para el Progreso* civic movement;
- urging that the authorities take immediate measures to dismantle paramilitary groups in line with stated governmental commitments.

APPEALS TO

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro de Gobierno
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno Serpa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 286 8025 / 286 0053 / 286 0485

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared"

Señores
 ASFADDES
 AA 011446
 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 29 July 1995.