

EXTERNAL

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Fear for Safety

21 August 1995

COLOMBIA Gloria FLÓREZ (f)
Fernando GONZÁLEZ
Pedro J. REY
and other members of MINGA human rights organization

There is serious concern for the safety of members of the non-governmental human rights organization MINGA, after a telephoned death threat was received at its headquarters in Bogotá.

The threat was made on 18 August 1995 at 1:50pm by an unidentified woman who said "*se van a morir hijueputas.*" - "you are going to die sons-of-bitches."

The death threat comes shortly after three people from the MINGA office in Bogotá, Gloria Flórez, Fernando González and Pedro J.Rey, were detained by members of the *Unidad Anti-secuestro y Extorsión* (UNASE), Anti-kidnapping and Extortion Unit, on 4 August 1995, in Aguachica, department of Cesar. Without explaining the reasons why, UNASE agents took the three human rights activists back to UNASE headquarters, where they demanded to see their identity documents in order to ascertain whether they had a criminal record. The three were released after several hours.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite President Samper's repeated pledges of his government's commitment to protect human rights and tackle impunity, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious violations with virtual impunity. Trade unionists, popular leaders, civic activists and human rights workers are amongst those frequently targeted.

Only in exceptional circumstances are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Human rights lawyers and members of human rights organizations are increasingly at risk in Colombia, despite presidential promises to ensure their safety. On 9 September 1994, President Samper declared in a speech that his government "would seek to have constructive relations with human rights organizations with the aim of suppressing human rights violations and would do everything necessary to protect the lives and the integrity of their members" ("*Buscará sostener con los organismos de derechos humanos relaciones constructivas en procura de suprimir las violaciones de tales derechos y pondrá de su parte cuanto sea necesario para proteger la vida y la integridad de sus miembros*").

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

- express concern at the reported death threat of 18 August 1995 against members of MINGA;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the threat, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that in line with President Samper's declared commitment to protect the lives of human rights defenders, all possible measures, deemed appropriate by those working with MINGA, be taken to protect them.

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 1 289 3377/286 7434

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2. Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Carlos Esguerra
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3. Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 288 2828 or 245 5292 or 287 0939

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES TO:

MINGA
AA 40303
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 12 October 1995.