

PUBLIC

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Robust measures urgently needed to protect Colombian human rights defenders

Human rights defenders Angel Quintero and Claudia Patricia Monsalve “disappeared” in Medellín, Antioquia Department, on 6 October 2000, barely a month after Amnesty International denounced death threats against them. Their whereabouts are unknown, and there is extreme concern for their safety. Witnesses say that they were abducted by two gunmen on a motorcycle and a group of men in a pick-up truck.

Both are members of the *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (ASFADDES), Association of Relatives of the Detained “Disappeared”, a national non-governmental human rights organization made up of relatives of the “disappeared” who work to discover the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

Angel Quintero had faced continuous threats as a result of his work with ASFADDES on the “disappearances” of members of his wife’s family. Claudia Monsalve has been working with ASFADDES to find out what happened to her brother, a university student who “disappeared” in 1995.

Since the abduction of Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve, other members of ASFADDES have been the victims of a widespread campaign of intimidation intended to stop them carrying out their important human rights work. Members have received threatening telephone calls and letters. Some have been followed.

Despite an international outcry, the Colombian authorities have taken no decisive action to find out who is responsible for the “disappearance” of Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve. They have also failed to deal seriously with the threats made against other members of ASFADDES. Although current security measures offered by the authorities for human rights defenders at risk – such as bullet-proof vests and reinforcements for office premises – are welcome, they fail to address the root causes or the complexity of the problem of military and paramilitary threats and attacks. Such measures can only be effective if accompanied by steps to ensure that attacks and acts of aggression against members of human rights organizations will not be tolerated: steps which include bringing those responsible for the attacks to justice and the rigorous implementation of an integrated protection program as recommended by national human rights organizations.

Please write, calling for a full and impartial investigation into the “disappearance” of Angel Quintero and Claudia Patricia Monsalve and urge the authorities to intensify the search for them as well as taking serious and robust action to protect ASFADDES workers and enable them to continue their work.

Send your letters to: Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 no. 7/26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia. Fax: +57 1 2867434/287 7939/2842186

Send letters of support to: ASFADDES, Apartado Aereo 011446, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia