

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Threats

14 February 1991

COLOMBIA : Monica SANCHEZ ARRIETA, human rights lawyer

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of human rights lawyer Monica Sánchez Arrieta following reported threats to her life.

According to reports, on 5 February 1991 Mónica Sánchez Arrieta received anonymous messages on her automatic telephone answer machine threatening her with death and accusing her of defending guerrillas ("defensora de guerrilleros"). Two days later she received a sufragio, an invitation to her own funeral, dated 10 February 1991. Since then she has reportedly been followed.

Mónica Sánchez has worked as a human rights lawyer in Medellín, capital of Antioquia department for some six years. In her work as a lawyer with the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee, Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, (CSPP), she defends political prisoners and investigates cases of human rights violations including extrajudicial execution, "disappearance" and torture in which members of the Colombian security forces are implicated.

The threats have been denounced to the Procurator of Antioquia, the Human Rights Commission of the Procurator General's Office (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Procuraduría General), and the Human Rights Commission of National Criminal Instruction Office (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Dirección Nacional de Instrucción Criminal).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 4 July 1990 human rights lawyer with the CSPP in Bogotá Dr. Alirio Pedraza Becerra "disappeared" following his detention by armed men in Bogotá. Two of the armed men reportedly identified themselves to two police agents who stood by during his abduction. His whereabouts remain unknown. Since Dr. Pedraza's "disappearance" a number of human rights workers have received death threats. On 10 July a man reportedly telephoned Elvia Urán Vda. de Beltrán, a long-time member of a human rights group in Medellín, threatening that if she did not stop her work with political prisoners she would suffer the same fate as Dr. Pedraza. Later that evening another human rights lawyer, Martha Luz Saldarriaga, also received anonymous death threats by telephone.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern for the safety of Monica Sánchez Arrieta following receipt of death threats, apparently because of her human rights work;
- asking that an immediate investigation be conducted into the death threats against her in order to identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324

+ 57 1 287 7937

+ 57 1 283 3066

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
Ministro de Gobierno
Ministerio de Gobierno
Calle 13 No. 8-38, Of. 304
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Gobierno, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Dr. Gustavo Arrieta
Procurador General de la Nación
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

COPIES TO:

Señores
CSPP
AA 22803
Bogotá
COLOMBIA

and to diplomatic representatives of COLOMBIA in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 March 1991.