

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "Disappearance"

27 February 1991

COLOMBIA: Guillermo León PALACIOS, teacher and trade union leader

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Guillermo León Palacios, teacher and trade union leader, who went missing on 8 February 1991 in Bogotá.

Guillermo León Palacios is Press and Communications Secretary for the Bogotá teachers' union Asociación Distrital de Educadores (ADE), member of the national teachers' association Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE). He was last seen leaving the ADE office in the South of Bogotá following a meeting on the night of Friday, 8 February. He reportedly left the offices at approximately 7.30pm but never arrived home.

Guillermo Palacios' colleagues have visited police and military installations, but his detention has not been acknowledged. Denunciations of his possible "disappearance" have been made, including to the office of the Procurator General, who has a human rights monitoring role and an investigation has been initiated, but his whereabouts remain unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years Amnesty International has received an increasing number of reports of human rights violations in Colombia, including "disappearances". Local human rights groups estimate that over 2,000 people have "disappeared" and remain unaccounted for since 1980. Principal targets have been people associated with trade unions, civic and community movements and legal left-wing parties, as well as alleged members of or sympathisers with armed opposition groups. Amnesty International is not always in a position to establish responsibility for each individual "disappearance", as perpetrators are often not fully identified. However, on the basis of available evidence the organization concludes that many such abuses are carried out by members of the Colombia security forces or civilians working under their command.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Guillermo León Palacios, who was last seen on 8 February 1991;
- urging that there be an effective investigation to establish his whereabouts;
- urging that if in detention, his legal situation be clarified and he be immediately released unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence and also allowed access to a lawyer and relatives;
- urging that he be humanely treated if in detention;
- explaining that you are writing on the basis of a pattern of alleged administrative detentions, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" of trade unionists in recent years.

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

Telegrams: Procurador General Gómez, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

COPIES TO:

Señores
CINEP
AA 25916
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 10 April 1991.