

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear for Safety

12 May 1995

COLOMBIA Diego Alberto ORTIZ PRIETO, schoolteacher, trade unionist

Diego Alberto Ortiz Prieto has not been seen since 27 April 1995 when he was abducted by armed men believed to be members of a paramilitary organization. There is serious concern for his safety.

Diego Alberto Ortiz Prieto was abducted by two heavily armed men as he was travelling by motorcycle from the school in San Luis where he teaches towards Corinto municipality, in the Department of Cauca. The men forced him to put the motorcycle in a house by the road and to accompany them on foot.

Local people claim that the armed men are involved with paramilitary groups operating in the area.

Close friends report that Diego Alberto Ortiz Prieto had been threatened due to his active participation with the Cauca Teachers Association, *Asociación de Institutores del Cauca*, ASOINCA, of which he is an active member. Diego Ortiz Prieto is also a well-known community activist in the village of San Luis, where he lives and works.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. These abuses have been regularly attributed to members of the security forces and their paramilitary allies. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are the perpetrators brought to justice. The vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service and paramilitary organizations continue to operate in many areas.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Diego Alberto Ortiz Prieto, who has not been seen since he was abducted on 27 April 1995 by armed men believed to be members of a paramilitary group;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into his whereabouts, the results of which should be made public, and that those found responsible for his abduction be brought to justice;
- urging that, if in detention, he be humanely treated, allowed access to lawyers and family members, and that he be released unless charged with a recognized criminal offence.

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) Procurator General:
Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Procurador General Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723/281 7531
Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación / Dear Dr. Vásquez

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 1 245 5292 or 288 2828 (recorded voice, then fax tone)
Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Comite Permanente para la defensa de los Derechos Humanos
Señores
CPDH
AA 12871
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 28 June 1995.