

EXTERNAL

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Attempted killing / Fear for safety

20 March 1996

COLOMBIAAlberto AGUDELO LÓPEZ, human rights activist

There is serious concern for the safety of Alberto Agudelo López who survived an attempt on his life on 15 March 1996 in the municipality of Orito, department of Putumayo. The circumstances surrounding the attack suggest the involvement of the security forces.

As Alberto Agudelo left his house at about 7.20pm on 15 March, he was followed by two armed men on a motorcycle. A short distance from the house, the men opened fire, hitting Alberto Agudelo twice in the neck. The attackers left the scene, apparently believing that their victim was dead. However, Alberto Agudelo survived and was taken to hospital.

For 15 days prior to the shooting, the army was reportedly patrolling most of Orito. However, on 15 March the patrols in the centre of the town, where the shooting took place, stopped. The attack has been denounced to the authorities.

Alberto Agudelo is a human rights activist who was involved in an investigation of the human rights situation in the department of Putumayo in 1991. Since 1992, he has worked as a human rights promoter and has been involved in the setting up of municipal human rights committees in the department of Putumayo.

Alberto Agudelo is a councillor elected by the *Movimiento Independiente de las Juntas de Acción Comunal*, Independent Movement of Community Action Councils.

Alberto Agudelo survived a previous attempt on his life on 7 December 1995, when gunmen opened fire on his house. Nobody was injured in that attack, official investigations into which pointed to the involvement of members of the Orito police. On several other occasions members of the police and the armed forces have reportedly harassed Alberto Agudelo as a result of his human rights work.

Since the latest attempt on his life, Alberto Agudelo and his family have left the area. However, there continues to be concern for his safety and that of his four brothers who remain in the municipality of Orito.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. 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. However, members of the Colombian security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Human rights defenders 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:

- expressing concern for the safety of Alberto Agudelo López and his family following the attempt on his life on 15 March 1996, in circumstances suggesting involvement of the security forces;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attack, urging that the results be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for measures to guarantee the safety of Alberto Agudelo López and other human rights activists threatened because of their work, so that they can continue their legitimate human rights work without fear, in line with President Samper's statement of 9 September 1994.

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 Portocarrero
 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 1 228 1874/222 1874/288 4906/228 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 286 00 53/ 286 04 85

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

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

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES TO:

Human Rights and Educational Organization

Señores, CINEP, AA 25916, 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 7 May 1996.