

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/018/2003

18 February 2003

Further Information on UA 180/02 (AMR 23/064/2002, 14 June 2002) and follow-up (AMR 23/137/2002, 2 December 2002) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Diana Milena Murcia (f)
Javier Alejandro Acevedo (m)
and other members of the non-governmental human rights organization
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo', 'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective

new name: Soraya Gutiérrez (f) human rights defender

On 13 February 2003, a group of unidentified gunmen armed with sub-machine guns reportedly opened fire on the vehicle in which human rights defender, Soraya Gutiérrez was travelling in Bogotá. She managed to escape unhurt.

Soraya Gutiérrez is a human rights defender with the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*, 'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective. At the time of the attack she was driving an armoured car assigned to the Lawyer's Collective as part of the government's protection program for human rights defenders. Prior to the attack Soraya Gutiérrez had reportedly received several anonymous telephone calls.

The attack against Soraya Gutiérrez follows a reported death threat against a member of the Lawyer's Collective by army-backed paramilitaries and increased surveillance of members of the Lawyer's Collective by unidentified individuals in recent months.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lawyers from the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* are involved in bringing cases to trial which implicate army officials, who have taken part by action or omission in serious human rights violations. Many human rights lawyers have been killed in Colombia, and others have been forced into exile in fear of their lives.

Members of the organization have also received death threats on several occasions in the past (See UA 88/01, AMR 23/043/2001, 6 April 2001 and UA 80/02, AMR 23/031/2002, 15 March 2002).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Soraya Gutiérrez and other members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* 'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the apparent attempt on her life, the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the Colombian authorities to take effective action to protect members of the organization in line with measures requested by those at risk, thus allowing them to safely continue their legitimate and important work on the defence of human rights;
- calling for the government to investigate all cases of threats against human rights defenders and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging the government to fully implement the principles of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998;

- calling on the government to initiate a meaningful dialogue with human rights defenders to address issues of their protection and the prevention of attacks against them.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Dr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe / Dear President Uribe

Vice-President of the Republic

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón

Vicepresidente de la República

Vicepresidencia

Carrera 8A No 5-57

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Vicepresidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 334 11 38

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente / Dear Vice-President

Minister of Defence

Martha Lucía Ramírez de Rincon

Ministra de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52 OFI. 217

Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN)

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministra de Defensa Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 266 0193

Salutation: Sra. Ministra / Dear Madam

COPIES TO:

'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo',

AA 33035

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 1 April 2003