

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK ACTION**Date:** 1 March 2001**Duration:** 15 April 2001**Colombia: Anniversary of ‘Disappearance’ of Jairo Bedoya Hoyos**

Jairo Bedoya Hoyos has not been seen since 2 March 2000, when he left his son at the “Urbanización Señorial” housing estate in Envigadó, municipality of Envigadó, department of Antioquia. Jairo is a member of the Organización Indígena de Antioquia (OIA), Indigenous Organization of Antioquia, which represents indigenous communities in Antioquia department.

As a member of the OIA, Jairo campaigns for the human rights of indigenous communities in Colombia, exposing the human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples. He is involved in the “Para que Embera Viva”, “For the Life of the Embera Indigenous People”, campaign for the respect of the cultural rights and security of the Embera indigenous community. It is believed that his work in this field led to his ‘disappearance’ either by the security forces and their paramilitary allies or by guerrilla forces. In recent years, several Embera indigenous communities have been campaigning against the construction of the Urrá Dam in the department of Córdoba in north-western Colombia, which will destroy much of their ancestral lands. Many members of these communities have been victims of serious human rights violations carried out by paramilitary forces working in alliance with the security forces. Guerrilla groups have also been responsible for deliberate and arbitrary killings of indigenous leaders in the same region, accusing them of siding with the paramilitary or security forces.

Many other human rights workers defending the rights of the indigenous communities who are often caught in the middle of Colombia's armed conflict, also face threats and are at risk because of their work.

TAKE ACTION!

1. Write to the Colombian government:

- express extreme concern that a year on from the 'disappearance' of Jairo Bedoya Hoyos of the *Organización Indígena de Antioquia (OIA)* on 2 March 2000 in Envigadó, Antioquia, it appears that no progress has been made in establishing his whereabouts;
- state that, according to information provided by the Colombian government, we know that the case has been referred to the relevant authorities. However the information received does not make clear whether the investigation has opened or advanced;
- urge the authorities to ensure that investigations are advanced and handled preferably by the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office which has made important advances in investigations of human rights violations in the past and ask to be kept informed of progress in the investigations;
- express concern for the safety of indigenous communities who have reportedly been the victim of human rights violations and violations of International Humanitarian Law by army-backed paramilitaries and guerrilla forces.
- underline your concern that failure to ensure advances into Jairo Bedoya's 'disappearance' suggest the Colombian government is failing to guarantee the security of indigenous communities and the activists which support them in line with repeated UN recommendations;
- state that individual protection measures such as bodyguards and bullet proof jackets are not sufficient to deter the perpetrators of human rights violations against members of human rights organizations, and stressing that genuine efforts to protect human rights defenders must prioritize investigations into killings, as well as threats and harassment, as part of a comprehensive program to prevent more attacks against them;
- urge the Colombian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders as laid out in the UN *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 on 9 December 1998 and the Organization of American States (OAS) *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted in June 2000 [AG/RES. 1711 (XXX-0/00)].

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Interior

Señor Armando Estrada Villa

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Palacio Echeverry

Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o., Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Fiscal General de la Nación

Alfonso Gómez Méndez

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Apartado Aéreo 29855

Diagonal 22B 52-01, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: +57 1 570 2000

Salutation: Dear Sir / Estimado Sr.

National Advocate of the People

Defensor del Pueblo

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: +57 1 346 1225

Salutation: Dear Sir / Estimado Sr.

Please send copies of your letters to:

Organización Indígena de Antioquia (OIA)

Cra. 49 No 63 - 57, Medellín, Colombia

Fax : +57 4 2910008

National newspaper

El Colombiano

Avda. Las Vegas, Envigadó, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Fax: +57 4 332 70 66 / 331 48 58

2. Write to the Minister of Foreign/External Affairs in your country:

- reiterating the concerns you have expressed to the Colombian government;
- urging your government to remind the Colombian government of its obligations regarding human rights defenders as laid out in the *UN 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 on 9 December 1998 and the

Organization of American States (OAS) *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted in June 2000.

***In case of any doubts or queries regarding this action please contact:
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