

UA 150/98

Fear for Safety

13 May 1998

**COLOMBIA Members of SINTRAMUNICIPIO-CARTAGO trade union and other municipal workers**

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Members of SINTRAMUNICIPIO-CARTAGO, Union of Municipal Workers of the municipality of Cartago, department of Valle del Cauca, and other municipal workers involved in industrial disputes for better working conditions and wages have received death threats in recent weeks and could be in danger.

One death threat reads: "... *no merecen nuestra consideración perros comunistas mejor huir que morir no hay tiempo aplicaremos justicia para ejemplo*", "... you do not deserve our consideration communist dogs - better flee than die - there is no time left for you - we will impose justice as an example". It was signed by a paramilitary group calling itself COOPROSEG, an apparent acronym the meaning of which is unknown.

Trade unionists who reported the threats to the police were reportedly told by the Cartago police commander that "... *cualquier cosa que suceda en la ciudad, si se roban una bicicleta, si hay un incendio, cualquier delito que se cometa, será responsabilidad de ustedes*", "... anything that happens in the town, if a bicycle is stolen, if there is a fire, any crime which is committed, will be your responsibility".

**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 has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights and to tackle impunity. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity.

Trade unionists, popular leaders, civic activists and human rights workers are among those whose human rights are frequently violated by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Perpetrators are very rarely brought to justice; most members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Guerrilla organizations have also been responsible for serious human rights abuses, including deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians and the holding of hostages.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of SINTRAMUNICIPIO-CARTAGO trade unionists and other municipal workers;
- urging that all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat be undertaken to guarantee their safety;
- urging that full and impartial investigations be undertaken into the death threats, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
carrera 8 No. 7-26  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

**Fax: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper**

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Fiscalía General de la Nación  
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 571 570 2000 (when ansaphone picks up dial 2017 for fax)**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.**

Governor of the Department of Valle del Cauca

Señor Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal  
Gobernador del Departamento de Valle del Cauca  
Gobernación de Valle del Cauca  
Carrera 6ª, Calles 9ª y 10ª  
Cali, Valle del Cauca  
Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador Álvarez, Valle del Cauca, Cali, Colombia**

**Fax: + 572 889 8818**

**Salutation: Estimado Señor Álvarez**

**COPIES TO:**

Lawyers' Association:

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados  
AA 44456  
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 24 June 1998.