

UA 182/94

Arbitrary Detention /Torture / Fear for Safety

6 May 1994

COLOMBIA Luis TELLEZ, civic activist  
Ayda MARTINEZ NIETO, popular activist  
Esteban CANCELADO, human rights activist  
Carlos ALBERTO RUIZ, human rights researcher  
Eduardo CARREÑO WILCHES, lawyer  
and Members of the Lawyer's Collective

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of several human rights workers following the arbitrary detention and torture of Luis Téllez and Ayda Martínez Nieto on 1 May 1994 by members of the National Police's *Sección de Policía Judicial y de Investigación* - SIJIN (Judicial and Investigative Police Section).

Luis Téllez, a member of the *Comité de Derechos Humanos de Ciudad Bolívar* - Human Rights Committee of Ciudad Bolívar, and Ayda Martínez Nieto were detained after participating in a march in Bogotá organized by Colombian human rights organizations as part of International Labour Day. A flyer, written by the *Grupo Internacional de Trabajo* (International Working Group - a coalition of Colombian human rights organizations) was distributed during the march. It focused on the "overall violation of workers' human rights and of the rights of the Colombian people".

They were both taken to the SIJIN station where they were interrogated and reportedly suffered physical and psychological torture. Luis Téllez was bound, gagged, beaten about the face, arms, stomach and chest until he lost consciousness. Water was forced up his nose to the point of near suffocation.

Luis Téllez was interrogated on the identity of the person the SIJIN agents had reportedly seen hand him the flyers. Luis Téllez reportedly stated under torture that it had been Carlos Alberto Ruiz, a researcher with the *Instituto Latinoamericanos de Servicios Legales Alternativos* - ILSA (Latin American Institute for Alternative Legal Services - a Colombian human rights organization).

Luis Téllez was also questioned about Esteban Cancelado, director of the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos y de Solidaridad con Desplazados* - CONADES (National Commission of Human Rights and Solidarity with Displaced People - a human rights organization working in particular with those people internally displaced by the political violence). The SIJIN agents involved in Luis Téllez's torture reportedly referred to Esteban Cancelado as a member of a guerrilla group.

Luis Téllez and Ayda Martínez were freed during the night of 1 May after they had been forced to sign a statement which said that they had been treated well.

From the documents Luis Téllez had been carrying with him, the SIJIN agents reportedly found information on human rights defenders and organizations, including the *Escuela de Formación Comunitaria Simón Rodríguez* - Community Training School of Simón Rodríguez in the Ciudad Bolívar area of Bogotá and the lawyer Eduardo Carreño Wilches from the *Colectivo de Abogados* (Lawyer's Collective, a legal organization working on cases of human rights abuses). Both organizations have frequently suffered harassment at the hands of state security force personnel. In October 1993 Dr Rafael Barrios Mendivil, President

of the Lawyer's Collective, was forced to flee the country after receiving death threats, he returned to Colombia in March 1994.

Members of the Lawyer's Collective have reported that in the last week of April they have been constantly followed by state security agents. On 2 May Carlos Alberto Ruiz was reportedly followed and the offices of ILSA, and CONADES were kept under constant surveillance by people believed to be from the security forces.

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of all these human rights workers given that such activists have frequently been the target of human rights violations in recent years. Often they are labelled as subversives by security and armed forces personnel, and in several cases these verbal attacks have been followed by physical attacks.

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

- expressing concern about the arbitrary arrest and torture of Luis Téllez and Ayda Martínez;
- urging the authorities to carry out impartial investigations into their arbitrary detention and torture, that the results of these investigations be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of Ayda Martínez Nieto, Luis Tellez, Esteban Cancelado, Carlos Alberto Ruiz, Eduardo Carreño Wilches, and other members of ILSA, CONADES and the Lawyer's Collective;
- urging the authorities to investigate reports that Carlos Alberto Ruiz and members of the Lawyer's Collective, ILSA and CONADES have been kept under surveillance and to make any findings public;
- urging the authorities to take concrete steps to ensure the safety of human rights workers.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Commissioner for the National Police:  
Señor Comisionado para la Policía Nacional  
Dr. Adolfo Salamanca  
Dirección General de la Policía  
CAN Tr 45 40-11, Santafé de Bogotá

**Telegrams:**

**Faxes : + 57 1 222 6024**

**Salutation: Sr. Comisionado/Dear Commissioner**

2) President of Colombia:  
Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939**

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

3) Procurator General:  
Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla  
Procurador General de la Nación  
Procuraduría General

Edificio Banco Ganadero  
Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723**  
**Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Arrieta**

4) Attorney General  
Dr. Gustavo de Greiff  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Fiscalia General de la Nación  
Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939/288 2828**  
**Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff/Dear Dr. de Greiff**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Grupo Internacional de Trabajo  
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados  
AA 44456  
Santa Fé 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 17 June 1994.