

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/37/99

23 April 1999

Further information on UA 150/98 (AMR 23/29/98, 13 May 1998) and follow-up (AMR 23/17/99, 17 February 1999) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIAMembers of SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago Trade Union and other municipal workers in the municipality of Cartago

and new name: Jairo Cordona and his family

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of Jairo Cordona, a former president of the SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago trade union, and his family after he received an anonymous message last week which read, "*hijueputa perro le damos veinte días para que salga de Cartago con su familia*", son-of-a-bitch you've got twenty days to get out of Cartago with your family.

Jairo Cordona had recently testified at the *Fiscalía General de la Nación Seccional Cartago*, the Attorney General's office in Cartago where he gave the names of people he believed were linked to paramilitary forces and the recent killings of trade unionists, and their supporters.

Paramilitaries are continuing to terrorize and kill SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago union members and their supporters.

The mutilated corpse of local trade union leader Albeiro de Jesús Arce was found on 21 March, two days after he "disappeared" - the circumstances of his death remain unclear.

In February, SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago trade union leader Gilberto Tovar Escudero was shot dead at his home in Cartago, in front of his wife and child, by gunmen believed to be paramilitaries.

Death threats against union members in April 1998 from a paramilitary group called COOPROSEG had followed protests by the union at the apparent failure by local authorities to comply with agreements they had made with municipal workers concerning working conditions. Municipal councilor Gilberto Nieto Patiño, who supported the protests, was killed in November 1998.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Trade unionists, human rights workers and other civic activists are often targeted for human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

Although in 1989 the government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups, they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country. The Attorney General recently said that the security forces had not acted on more than 200 outstanding arrest warrants issued against alleged paramilitary members responsible for widespread human rights violations. So far, the government of Andrés Pastrana, who became president in August 1998, has failed to take effective steps to tackle the country's long running human rights crisis.

**Sindicato de Trabajadores del Municipio de Cartago (SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago),
Union of Municipal Workers in the municipality of Cartago, department of Valle
del Cauca**

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jairo Cordona, his family and other members of SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago trade union;
- urging that all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat be taken to guarantee their security;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are initiated into the death threats against SINTRAMUNICIPIO-Cartago members, the killings of Gilberto Tovar Escudero, Gilberto Nieto Patiño and Albeiro de Jesús Arce, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana,
Presidente de la República,
Palacio de Nariño,
Carrera 8 No. 7-26,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 289 3377/286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

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: + 57 1 570 2022 (if unobtainable at first, please try later)

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

Governor of Valle del Cauca Department,

Gustavo Alvarez 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, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 2 8898818

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

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 4 June 1999.