

UA 74/01

Fear for

COLOMBIA Jaime Alberto DUQUE CASTRO,
Other members of the SUTIMAC El Cairo Cement Workers Union in Santa Barbara,
department of Antioquia

A trade union leader, Jaime Alberto Duque Castro, has been abducted by army-backed paramilitaries. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety, and for that of other trade union members in the area, especially given that at least 25 trade unionists have been killed this year, most of them by paramilitaries.

Paramilitaries with the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, reportedly abducted Jaime Alberto Duque Castro on 24 March. He had gone to watch a football match in the town of Santa Bárbara, department of Antioquia, with other trade unionists. The paramilitaries apprehended him at the match, and reportedly beat him up before taking him away.

Jaime Alberto Duque Castro is the president of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Cementos El Cairo*, (SUTIMAC), El Cairo Cement Workers Union. Prior to his abduction, the AUC had reportedly been keeping SUTIMAC under surveillance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The security and armed forces and their paramilitary allies often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. Those they accuse are frequently harassed, tortured and killed. During 2000, 112 trade unionists were murdered. In December 2000, a leading trade union leader, Wilson Borja Díaz, had to flee Colombia after he was shot and wounded by gunmen (see UA 387/00, 21 December 2000). Several active and retired police officers have been linked to the attack. On 15 February, 25 unionists affiliated to the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Trade Union Confederation, occupied the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in protest at the threats, harassment and persecution that trade unionists continue to face.

The systematic persecution of trade unionists in Colombia has been going on for years. During the 1998 national strike, seven trade union leaders, including CUT Vice-president Jorge Ortega Garcia, were shot dead (see UA 274/98, AMR 23/80/98, 21 October 1998 and follow up AMR 23/90/98, 24 November 1998). Those responsible for the killings have never been brought to justice.

Guerrilla forces and armed opposition groups have also committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, for example by executing those they accuse of being security force or paramilitary collaborators and supporters.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jaime Alberto Duque Castro, who was abducted on 24 March, and for that of other SUTIMAC members;
- urging the authorities to take all the necessary steps to establish his whereabouts, and to secure his safety and immediate release;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation to be carried out into the abduction, with those responsible brought to justice;
- asking the authorities what measures they are going to take to guarantee the safety of those at risk;

- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

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 the Interior

Señor Armando Estrada Villa

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Palacio Echeverry

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

Telegrams:Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960

Salutation:Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

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 2022 (If the call is answered, say "Fax, por favor" and wait for the signal.)

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr. Gómez Méndez

COPIES TO:

Human rights organization

CSPP

AA 22803

Bogota

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 11 May 2001.