

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/037/2003

UA 136/03 Fear for safety / possible disappearance

15 May 2003

COLOMBIA **Members of the *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO), Oil Workers= Trade Union**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO), Oil Workers= Trade Union, after an e-mailed death threat was sent to the USO branch office in Cartagena, Bolívar Department on 6 May 2003 by the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self Defense Forces of Colombia.

The message of the e-mail was as follows:

“Sirs USO Cartagena,

The present message is to inform you about the findings of the investigations where we have proved that members of the FARC and the ELN work in the Oil Worker=s Trade Union (USO).

The measures taken by the Central Block of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia are as follows:

All trade unionist leaders and sons of workers members of the USO are declared a military target, we have already started with our actions against the sons of the workers.

Take note that the trade unionist Aury Sara was also given a warning and look what happened to him for being a guerrilla informer”.

“Señores USO Cartagena

La presente es para comunicarles de los resultados de la investigación donde comprobamos (sic) que en la Unión sindical Obrera (USO) laboran vandidos (sic) de las FARC y del ELN.

Las medidas tomadas por el Bloque Central de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia son:

Declaramos objetivo militar a todos los líderes sindicales e hijos de trabajadores suscritos a las USO, ya comenzamos nuestras acciones contra los hijos de los trabajadores. Vean que al sindicalista Aury Sara también le dimos previo aviso y miren lo que le paso por sapo”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) National Liberation Army are the two main guerilla groups in Colombia.

USO trade unionists have been repeatedly threatened and have been the victims of extrajudicial executions and disappearances, committed by army-backed paramilitary. In addition, the security and armed forces as well as their paramilitary allies often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. Guerilla forces have also been responsible for killing and threatening those they accuse of collaborating with their enemies.

Aury Sara Marrugo, President of *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO), Oil Workers' Trade Union, and his bodyguard were abducted on 30 November 2001 by members of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia. At the time of their abduction, USO members throughout the country received a spate of death threats. The bodies of Aury Sara and his bodyguard were found on 5 December. (see UA 309/01 (AMR 23/121/2001, 3 December 2001 and follow-up AMR 23/122/2001, 6 December 2001).

The *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia* (CUT), Colombian Trade Union Congress, estimates that during 2002, at least 172 affiliated trade unionists were victims of extrajudicial executions (EJEs) in Colombia. One hundred and sixty four received death threats, 26 were victims of kidnapping, 17 were victims of an attempted kidnapping, seven were forcibly displaced, 132 were arbitrarily detained and around 80 sought exile. According to the CUT, these violations are a direct consequence of their trade union activity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of members of the *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO), Oil Workers= Trade Union following the reported paramilitary death threat against the trade union;
- asking the authorities what measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, they are going to take to guarantee the safety of those at risk;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into this latest threat, that the results are made public and those responsible brought to justice.
- calling for links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Colombia to be included in these investigations.;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and other recommendations made by the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592 / 337 58 90

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe / Dear President Uribe

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos,

Ministro del Interior y de Justicia

Ministerio del Interior

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 566 4573

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B 52-01

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 /2017 if someone answers say “me da tono de fax por favor por Dr Osorio”)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Trade Union

USO –Nacional

Calle 38 No13-37

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 26 June 2003.