

UA 103/99

Possible**COLOMBIA Professor Dario Betancourt Echeverry**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Professor Dario Betancourt Echeverry, a victim of a possible "disappearance" following his abduction on 30 April 1999. Professor Echeverry is renowned for his research into violence and human rights violations in Colombia, and his family and colleagues believe that he may have been the target of a politically motivated abduction.

The possible "disappearance" of Professor Echeverry, head of the Social Sciences department of the *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional*, National University of Educational Sciences, in the capital Bogotá, comes during a wave of attacks on university professors in Colombia.

On 4 May, Professor Hernán Henao Delgado, director of the Institute of Regional Studies at the University of Antioquia, was shot dead by presumed paramilitaries in his office on the university campus in Medellín. Like Professor Echeverry, he had carried out extensive research work on human rights and violence.

On 6 May a professor at the faculty of law at the *Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia*, Cooperative University of Colombia, Argiro Giraldo Quintero, survived an attempt on his life when his car came under fire after he had left the university premises in west Medellín.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years there have been widespread and systematic human rights violations in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary arrest. Teachers and popular activists have frequently been the victims of such human rights violations.

More than 150 "disappearances" were recorded in 1998 alone, and more than 3000 in the last decade. Members of the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Kidnapping and hostage taking by armed opposition groups is also widespread.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Professor Dario Betancourt Echeverry and calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into his possible "disappearance" on 30 April 1999;
- expressing concern at the killing of Profesor Hernán Henao Delgado on 4 May and the attempted killing of Professor Argiro Giraldo Quintero on 6 May;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into these acts, 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
Tx: 44281 PALP CO
Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351
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, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes:+ 571 570 2022
Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr. Gómez

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez,
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior,
Carrera 8, No.8-09, Paso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes:45406 MINGO CO
Fax:+ 57 1 286 8025
Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Fundación Manuel Cepeda Vargas
AA 28233
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia.

and 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 22 June 1999.