

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Harassment/Fear for safety

19 July 1993

COLOMBIA:

**Members of Regional Human Rights Committee (CREDHOS) in
Barrancabermeja**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of members of the Regional Human Rights Committee, Comité Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CREDHOS) of Barrancabermeja, Santander department. Members of CREDHOS have again reportedly been the victims of threats and harassment by officials from the army's Nueva Granada Battalion, Batallón Nueva Granada, whose base is in Barrancabermeja, as a result of their human rights work.

On 27 May 1993, CREDHOS issued a press release denouncing human rights violations committed by members of Nueva Granada Battalion against the civilian population of the north-eastern and south-eastern sectors of Barrancabermeja. Later the same day, the President of CREDHOS telephoned the Battalion base to ask for information about some detainees. The Battalion Commander, Luís Fabio García Chávez reportedly responded in an aggressive and insulting manner and accused the president of CREDHOS of being "a defender of guerrillas" "*defensor de guerrilleros*".

On 29 June, CREDHOS requested that the Regional Procurator, Procurador Provincial and the Municipal Ombudsman, Personero Municipal, visit the Battalion base as they had received information that three detainees being held at the base were being tortured. A delegation from the Procurator's office went to the base accompanied by CREDHOS' legal adviser who when he identified himself was verbally attacked by an army major, who accused him of working for the guerrillas "*trabajar para los bandoleros, para los voceros de la guerrilla ...*"

On 12 July at 2.45 pm the President of CREDHOS telephoned the Battalion base to ask for information about a reported detainee. On identifying himself, he was verbally attacked by the same major and accused, amongst other things, of being "political spokesperson for the guerrillas", "*vocera política de la guerrilla*", "the bandits' special envoy", "*mandamás de los bandoleros*" and of slandering the military. Similar accusations in the past have been followed by physical attacks against CREDHOS workers.

CREDHOS has frequently come under attack in recent years. Three members of CREDHOS have been killed in circumstances suggesting they were extrajudicially executed. (Please refer to UA 63/92, AMR 23/10/92 and follow-ups AMR 23/33/92 and AMR 23/39/92). Other members have been subjected to serious death threats and constant harassment, including being permanently followed by people who, following investigations, were identified as belonging to state security agents. Several of CREDHOS' staff have been forced to leave Barrancabermeja due to the serious risks to their lives. Although the Colombian government has condemned the attacks on CREDHOS and has promised full investigations, those responsible have not yet been identified and brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The work of CREDHOS in defence of human rights in the conflict-torn region of the Magdalena Medio has achieved international recognition. In 1991 CREDHOS received the "Lettelier-Moffit" award from the Institute of Political Studies in Washington, United States. Amongst other activities, CREDHOS regularly denounce human rights violations committed by the regular armed forces and by paramilitary groups operating under their command or with their support. CREDHOS have also denounced abuses committed by guerrilla organizations in the region.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of all members of CREDHOS, who have reportedly been the victims of further harassment by army officers from the Nueva Granada Battalion;
- urging that there be an investigation into this harassment, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives of CREDHOS members and all human rights workers so that they can enjoy fundamental human rights and carry out their lawful activities.

APPEALS TO

1) Commander of the 'Nueva Granada' Battalion:

Teniente Coronel Luis Fabio García Chávez
Comandante Batallón Nueva Granada
Calle 12, Pueblo Nuevo
Barrancabermeja
Santander, Colombia

Salutation: Estimado Comandante /
Dear Sir

Telegrams: Comandante Batallón Nueva Granada, Barrancabermeja, Santander, Colombia

2) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Ministro /
Dear Minister

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

3) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de
la Nación /
Dear Dr. Arrieta

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

4) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogota, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 287 0939

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff /
Dear Dr. de Greiff**

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

2) CREDHOS

AA 505
Barrancabermeja
Santander
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 30 August 1993.