

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 199/94 Fear of Safety/Possible Extrajudicial Execution 24 May 1994

COLOMBIA

Teofila ROA (f)
Yesid BOCANEGRA MARTINEZ
Omar MENDOZA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of indigenous leader Teofila Roa following the killing of Yesid Bocanegra and the attempted killing of Omar Mendoza.

Yesid Bocanegra Martínez was a member of the Guaipá indigenous community which is situated in the municipality of Ortega, department of Tolima. He was 28 years old, for eight years he had worked for the *Consejo Regional Indígena de Tolima* - Indigenous Council of Tolima (CRIT) most recently as part of the training team. Omar Mendoza is in his early thirties and also lives in the municipality of Ortega, department of Tolima. He is Vice-President of the CRIT.

At 8.00pm on 15 May 1994, three armed men opened fire on the two indigenous leaders killing Yesid Bocanegra and seriously injuring Omar Mendoza. Reportedly the two men were targeted by paid killers (*sicarios*). According to reports received, Yesid Bocanegra and Omar Mendoza were known to be under threat. Omar Mendoza himself has reportedly survived two previous attempts on his life. The security forces have failed to investigate previous threats against and killings of CRIT leaders and the indigenous population in Tolima.

Amnesty International is also concerned for the safety of Teofila Roa, the President of CRIT, and her family, whose house was kept under surveillance on 19 May 1994 by a group of unidentified men. The men reportedly threatened neighbours who then warned Teofila Roa of their presence and she was able to escape.

These events are representative of a pattern of harassment, death threats and extrajudicial executions members of CRIT have faced in recent years at the hands of paramilitary forces and local landed interests.

The CRIT sees the killings of its members as a threat to indigenous organization in the department of Tolima. It criticises elements of the Colombian Government for being responsible for some of the violence against it, whilst at the same time condemns the abuses its members have faced at the at the hands of guerrilla forces.

On the 8 March 1993, for example, Yesid Ducuara Villabón, a member of the community of Guaipá Centro, in the municipality of Ortega, was killed by the FARC. On 28 October 1993, members of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia FARC, a guerrilla force, killed Nelson Moreno the President of the Municipal Council of Ortega, department of Tolima.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest, although President César Gaviria Trujillo has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights. However, members of the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to

violate human rights with virtual impunity. Members of indigenous communities and organizations have been the target of human rights violations at the hands of the security and paramilitary forces within the context of land disputes and counter-insurgency operations. Indigenous communities and organizations have also been the target of human rights abuses at the hands of guerrilla forces. Amnesty International condemns deliberate and arbitrary killings, the taking of hostages or the torture or ill-treatment of captives by armed opposition groups.

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

- expressing your concern for the safety of Teofila Roa, her family and Omar Mendoza;
- urging that there be an immediate investigation into the surveillance Teofila Roa has been under and that the findings are made public and that those responsible for threatening her neighbours be brought to justice;
- urging that all possible measures are undertaken to protect Teofila Roa and her family, Omar Mendoza, other members of the CRIT and the local indigenous population;
- urging that there be an immediate inquiry into the killing of Yesid Bocanegra Martínez and the attempt on Omar Mendoza's life and that the findings should be made public and those responsible be brought to justice;

APPEALS TO

1) President of Colombia:

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

Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Gaviria

2) Procurator General:

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

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723

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

3) Minister of Justice:

Dr. Andrés González Díaz
 Ministro de Justicia
 Ministerio de Justicia
 Carrera 26, No.27-48
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472/ 288 0392

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO

Andean Commission of Jurists
Comisión Andina de Juristas
AA 58533
Santafé de Bogotá
Colombia

Indigenous Organization
Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima - CRIT
Carrera 6 No. 4-47
Coyaima
Tolima

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 5 July 1994.