

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please bring this action to the attention of the person responsible for outreach work in your section so that appeals from children's and youth groups can be generated.

UA 274/93 Fear for safety

13 August 1993

COLOMBIA: Thousands of street children in Bogotá, the capital

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of thousands of street children in Bogotá, the capital, following the appearance on 11 August 1993 of posters in the city centre inviting them to attend their own funerals. These posters, which announce the extermination of "delinquent street children" (*delincuencia*), are signed in the name of industrialists, shopkeepers and civic groups. Ironically, the posters appeared on the eve of a conference in Bogotá on violence and cruelty against children. This campaign against the street children appears to be a reaction to a reported wave of petty crime in the city centre which the authorities attribute to vagrants including street children.

Amnesty International has received an increasing number of reports of killings of so-called "social undesirables" (*desechables sociales*) including street children, vagrants and suspected delinquents in the principal Colombian cities. Murder operations directed against these people are routinely termed "social clean-up operations" (*operaciones de limpieza social*) and are generally attributed to shadowy "death squads". However, in a number of cases evidence has emerged that the so-called "death squads" were made up of members of the National Police, frequently operating with the support of local tradespeople.

Amnesty International is therefore concerned that these posters indicate the start of a new "clean-up operation" against street children and other "social undesirables" and that their lives are now at risk.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. President César Gaviria Trujillo has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity.

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 street children in Bogotá following

the appearance in the city of posters threatening their lives;

- urging that there be an immediate inquiry into these threats, in order to identify those responsible and bring them to justice;

- urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives and well-being of street children.

APPEALS TO

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324/7434/287 7937

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Gaviria

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
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

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
Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

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

4) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalía General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santa Fe de Bogotá
Colombia
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 287 0939

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

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights and Educational Organization:

Señores
CINEP
AA 25916
Santa Fe de Bogotá
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 24 September 1993.