

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/050/2006

13 December 2006

UA 333/06 Fear for safety/Death threats

COLOMBIA **Marqueza Arrieta (f)
Domingo Tovar Arrieta (m) Director of the Human Rights Department of the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Colombian Trade Union Confederation**

Marqueza Arrieta, whose son is a prominent trade unionist, has received death threats from men believed to be paramilitaries. The real target is believed to be her son, Domingo Tovar Arrieta, a leading trade union activist. His entire family are thought to be in danger.

On 4 December Marqueza Arrieta was stopped in the street by two men on a motorbike, who told her, *la vamos a matar, está advertida* ("we are going to kill you, you have been warned"). She reported this to the *fiscalía* (local Attorney General's office) in her home municipality of Corozal, Sucre Department, in northern Colombia. This was apparently the latest and most serious of a string of threats she has received over the last few years.

Domingo Tovar Arrieta is the Director of the Human Rights Department of the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Colombian Trade Union Confederation. He has been threatened repeatedly since November 2003, after he and the CUT supported a campaign calling on voters to abstain in a referendum the Colombian government was promoting to gain popular support for wide-ranging social and economic reforms, the government lost the referendum. He received an anonymous call from a man who apparently told him, *Pagará con su vida la pérdida del referendo* ("You will pay with your life for the loss of the referendum") (see Further Information on UA 89/03, AMR 23/070/2003, 6 November 2003).

On 5 September Domingo Tovar Arrieta sent a letter to the Colombian government and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights complaining that since November 2003 he had been under frequent surveillance, and he and his family had received telephoned death threats.

On 11 March 2005, the CUT issued a press release which indicated that army-backed paramilitary leaders in the Department of Córdoba had drawn up a list of trade unionists to be killed, supposedly because they had been critical of the government-sponsored process of supposed paramilitary demobilization. According to the press release members of the XVII and XII Brigades of the Colombian Army would be involved in carrying out the killings and that Domingo Tovar was a key target.

In the press release the CUT also condemned the way Domingo Tovar's family had been threatened, and said that he was kept under surveillance almost every day by people in cars or on motorbikes without licence plates. It also said people had been filming his home and taking photographs of him outside his home. Trade unionists and human rights defenders who have been kept under surveillance in this way have often been killed by the army or paramilitaries.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Marqueza Arrieta, who was threatened with death on 4 December, her son Domingo Tovar Arrieta and their family;
- calling on the authorities to take effective action to protect them, in accordance with their own wishes;
- calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the threats received by Marqueza Arrieta and Domingo Tovar Arrieta, making the results of the investigation public, and bringing those responsible to justice;

- calling on the authorities to fully apply the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties which recognizes the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders (which include trade unionists) and protects their right to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 342 0592

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

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01), Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 414 9139

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear Mr Iguarán

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Ministro del Interior y Justicia

Dr. Carlos Holguín Sardi

Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia, Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, D.C. Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Trade Union Confederation

Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia

Calle 35 No 7 – 25, Piso 9, Santafé 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 January 2007.