

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/54/92

Distr: UA/SC

UA 325/92 Death Threats

21 October 1992

COLOMBIA: Raquel Judith BERNAL DUEÑAS, female, former political activist
 Jorge Ernesto BERNAL DUEÑAS, teacher, trade unionist

Amnesty International has learned with concern that death threats have reportedly been received by Raquel Judith and Jorge Ernesto Bernal Dueñas.

Raquel Judith Bernal Dueñas, who was a political activist with the left-wing coalition party Union Patriótica (UP), Patriotic Union, and her brother Jorge Ernesto Bernal Dueñas, a teacher and trades unionist, have reportedly been receiving threatening anonymous telephone calls and have been followed and harassed by individuals who appear to be state security agents. According to information received by the organization, this harassment has increased in recent days and there is serious concern for their safety.

Raquel Judith and Jorge Ernesto Bernal Dueñas are the sister and brother of Gloria Esther Bernal Dueñas, who was reportedly detained, tortured and later "disappeared" by members of the National Police on 7 January 1988 in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department. Her case has been presented to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In an official report produced by the Procurator's office in September 1991, the Public Ministry stated that more than 3,000 complaints had been lodged against the army and police in the past two years for human rights abuses including murder, "disappearance" and torture. The report said that a significant number of the victims were member of the Union Patriótica or trade unionists. President César Gaviria Trujillo, on presenting the report, stated:

"No puede el Gobierno desconocer la gravedad de las acusaciones que se hacen en forma reiterada y masiva contra sus agentes, ni ignorar hasta que punta reina la impunidad por violación de derechos humanos".

"The government cannot fail to recognise the seriousness of the accusations made constantly and on a massive scale against its agents, nor ignore the extent of impunity in cases of human rights violations."

However, despite the government's declared commitment to uphold respect for human rights, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses, including torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" with virtual impunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail

letters either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Raquel Judith and Jorge Ernesto Bernal Dueñas, following increasing threats against their lives;
- urging that there be an immediate investigation into the threats and harassment against them in order to identify those responsible and bring them to justice;
- urging that the government take all possible measures to protect the lives of civilians, members of trade unions and legal opposition parties and ensure that they are able to carry out their lawful activities without fear.

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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 3066, 286 7324, 287 7937

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
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO, 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

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

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño
Defensor del Pueblo
Defensoría del Pueblo
Calle 34, Carrera 5
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO, 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño

4) Dr. Gustavo de Greiff

Fiscal General
Fiscalia General
Hotel Orgidea Real
Carrera 7, No 32-16
Santa Fe de Bogotá
Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 287 7480

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

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Andean Commission of Jurists
Comisión Andina de Juristas
AA 58533
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 2 December 1992.