

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death threats

22 November 1990

COLOMBIA: Rafael MARTINEZ MORA, priest

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Rafael Martínez Mora, a Franciscan priest, following reported threats to his life.

Rafael Martínez is the parish priest of Tiquisio, in the municipality of Pinillos, Bolívar department. His parish falls within the diocese of Magangué. The region was militarized in June 1990 by the Colombian army's counter-insurgency Brigada Móvil, Mobile Brigade. Padre Rafael Martínez had reportedly asked the Procurator General to investigate a series of abuses allegedly committed by the Brigada Móvil against the civilian population during its counter-insurgency operations, including four deaths outside of combat, allegations of torture, and the complete destruction of one community, Aguas Frias, including crops, houses and livestock. A commission from the Procurator General's office is currently in the area investigating these events.

Rafael Martínez was recently warned that an order had been given to kill him by security forces based in the area on the grounds that he is an "enlace de la guerrilla", linked to the guerrilla, and a "false sacerdote", a false priest. His brother, Jesús Martínez Mora, another priest, was also warned.

Jesús Martínez had been previously detained by the army on 8 April 1988. When his detention was later denied it was feared that he had "disappeared", but following the rapid intervention of the Bishop of Magangué he was released from detention.

Concern for Rafael Martínez recently increased when it became known that an attempt was made to arrest another priest from his parish on his arrival in Managué and that police agents have apparently been making enquiries about Rafael Martínez' whereabouts. The parish correspondence has also reportedly been intercepted. Amnesty International is concerned that the threat against his life may be the result of Rafael Martínez' protests against the activities of the armed forces in the area.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the beginning of 1990, Amnesty International has become seriously concerned at the increasing number of reports of killings of non-combatant civilians in Colombia. The majority of attacks on non-combatant civilians occur in rural areas placed under tight army control as a result of alleged guerrilla activity. Some killings of civilians appear to be largely indiscriminate attacks against whole communities, targetted for their perceived political allegiances. In other cases victims, particularly civic and community leaders and members of legal left-wing parties, appear to have been individually targetted and have been subject to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

In his inaugural address to the nation in August 1990, President César Gaviria said that the public's confidence and credibility in the armed forces was dependant on them acting within the Constitution and showing absolute respect for human rights.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Rafael Martínez Mora following the threats made against his life, apparently following protests against the activities of the army's Brigada Móvil in the area;

- asking that an immediate investigation be conducted into the death threats against him in order to identify those responsible and bring them to justice;

- asking that the necessary steps be taken to ensure his safety and that of other priests and all those working in defense of human rights in Colombia.

**APPEALS TO**

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Bogotá  
 COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia  
 Telexes: 44281 PALP CO  
 Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324

General Oscar Botero Restrepo  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
 Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia  
 Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO  
 Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez  
 Procurador General de la Nación  
 Edificio Banco Ganadero  
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
 Bogotá  
 COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Procurador General Gómez, Bogotá, Colombia  
 Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

**COPIES TO:**

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz  
 AA 52332  
 Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 January 1991.