

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/62/94
Distr: UA/SC

UA 295/94 Possible extrajudicial execution / Fear for safety 10 August 1994

COLOMBIA Manuel CEPEDA VARGAS, parliamentarian
Aída ABELLA (f), opposition politician
and other opposition leaders

On 9 August 1994 leading opposition politician Manuel Cepeda Vargas was reportedly shot and killed by two armed men as he sat in his car near his home in the Ciudad Kennedy district of Bogotá. In view of reports that he had received a written death threat three months ago warning that a group of killers would be sent to assassinate him and Aída Abella, his murder raises serious fears for her safety and the safety of other opposition leaders in Colombia.

Manuel Cepeda Vargas was a leading member of the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) and of the *Unión Patriótica* (UP), Patriotic Union Party. He had been a Director of the newspaper *Voz* and representative of the House of Deputies *Cámara de Representantes*. He had just become a member of the Colombian Senate. He was a member of the Senate's Human Rights Commission and a member of the Senate commission set up to examine former President Gaviria's objections to the draft law against forced "disappearances" (see EXTRA 34/94 (AMR 23/53/94, 7 July 1994) and follow-ups).

Manuel Cepeda had received several death threats since 1992 (see UA 335/92, AMR 23/57/92, 28 October 1992). He had denounced the fact that his name appeared on a death list drawn up as part of the "*Golpe de Gracia*" (Coup de Grace) Plan to kill Communist Party and UP leaders, to senior officials of President Gaviria's government. Following the appearance of the death list, José Miller Chacón, another PCC leader, was killed on 23 November 1993. Responsibility for this list has reportedly been attributed by some to the military. Manuel Cepeda had also faced accusations in the media over several years accusing him of being a guerrilla leader.

Both the Colombian Communist Party and the UP have been particular targets for human rights violations, including death threats, politically motivated killings and "disappearances". In early October 1992 the Advocate for the People, Dr. Jaime Triviño Córdoba, published a report which concluded that the main perpetrators of violence against UP activists were paramilitary groups, members of the security forces and hired gunmen. According to the official report 717 members of the UP have been killed since the party's creation in 1985. Colombian human rights organizations presently place the figure at over 2,000 activists. Aída Abella is a UP leader, and as such is believed to be particularly at risk.

Manuel Cepeda was the only UP/PCC parliamentarian in the present Colombian Congress. His death came only two days into the new government of President Ernesto Samper who in his inauguration speech of 7 August stated that "*Colombia will make its commitment to defend and respect human rights a reality*".

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

- expressing deep concern for the killing of Manuel Cepeda Vargas by two gunmen on 9 August 1994, in circumstances suggesting his extrajudicial execution;
- expressing concern for the safety of surviving members of the *Unión Patriótica* party including Aída Abella and members of other opposition parties and urging the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee their safety;

- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into the killing of Manuel Cepeda, that the results of the investigations are made public and those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into the *Golpe de Gracia* plan and the death list drawn up as part of it, that the results of the investigations are made public and that those responsible be brought to justice including any members of the security forces who may be found responsible;
- urging President Samper to stand by the promises made in his inauguration speech of 7 August 1994 to protect human rights.

APPEALS TO:President of Colombia:

Señor Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Velásquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero Zea, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939/288 2828

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Sarmiento/Dear Dr. Sarmiento

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Andean Commission of Jurists
Comisión Andina de Juristas
AA 58533
Santa Fé 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 21 September 1994.