

PUBLIC

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Fear for

COLOMBIA Angela Muñoz Trujillo, (f), journalist
Other journalists in Barrancabermeja and the rest of Santander
Department

Killed: Mario Prada Díaz, (m), journalist

Death threats have been made against Angela Muñoz Trujillo, editor of the weekly newspaper *El Vocero* and her colleagues. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety and that of other journalists in Barrancabermeja and the rest of Santander Department.

On 9 July Angela Muñoz Trujillo was stopped at the traffic lights near the ECOPETROL health centre in Barrancabermeja by two armed men. They threatened her saying, "*si te arriesgas mañana a sacar el periódico, en la tarde estarás velando a uno de tus colaboradores*", "if you dare to publish the newspaper tomorrow morning, in the afternoon you'll be at the wake of one of your colleagues".

On 8 July, the commander of the army-backed paramilitary group, *Bloque Central Bolívar*, Central Bolivar Bloc of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self Defense Forces of Colombia, declared in a local newspaper that various members of the local press and trade unions are paramilitary targets.

Fears for Angela Muñoz Trujillo and other journalists in Santander are heightened following press reports of the killing of Mario Prada Díaz, editor of the monthly newspaper *Horizonte Sabanero*, on 12 July near the municipality of Sabana de Torres, Santander Department by unknown gunmen.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Barrancabermeja is under siege from army-backed paramilitaries who control entire areas of the city, despite the presence of large numbers of security forces. Journalists and other members of civil society have frequently been harassed, tortured and killed; often by paramilitaries who, together with the security and armed forces, have often accused them of being guerrilla sympathizers. The Colombian Human Rights Ombudsman, *Defensor del Pueblo*, declared on 10 July that the local authorities and the securities in Barrancabermeja as well as the Colombian government should take effective measures to protect journalism in the city. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for killing and threatening journalists they accuse of sympathizing with their enemies.

Last year around 10 journalists were killed and many others were threatened by either guerrilla or paramilitary forces.

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

- urging the Colombian authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect the safety of Angela Muñoz Trujillo and other journalists in the region, as deemed appropriate by the individual journalists themselves, so that they may carry out their legitimate work in safety;
- calling for an independent, impartial and conclusive investigation into the threats against Angela Muñoz Trujillo and other journalists

in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- calling for an independent, impartial and conclusive investigation into the killing of Mario Prada Díaz, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Santander, and urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 334 1323

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

(NB: Andrés Pastrana is the President until 7 August when President-elect Dr. Alvaro Uribe takes office.)

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior,
Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 5298 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2017 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights
Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos
CREDHOS

AA 505

Barrancabermeja

Santander, 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 27 August 2002.