

UA 221/01

Fea.

COLOMBIA Pablo Javier Arenales (m), José Guillermo Larios (m), Yaneth Rubio Rodríguez (f) - human rights activists

The human rights activists named above, have received a death threat from a paramilitary group. They are all members of a regional human rights organization and there is serious concern for their safety and for that of other community activists in the city of Barrancabermeja.

They are members of *Corporación Regional de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights. CREDHOS works closely with another human rights organization called REINICIAR, based in Bogotá, to which the death threat was delivered on 3 September. An envelope containing a condolence card was sent by the *Grupo de Limpieza - AUC*, the 'social-cleansing group' of the army-backed *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia paramilitary group. It announced the funerals of CREDHOS members, Pablo Javier Arenales, José Guillermo Larios and Yaneth Rubio Rodríguez.

The threat came three days after a letter was circulated on the internet, which declared that the *Grupo de Limpieza Urbana - AUC* would be starting a campaign (*campaña de limpieza*) to rid Colombia of people they believe to be urban guerrillas. In the letter, the AUC invited "all good Colombians, who like us want a country free of subversion, to continue supporting us in our admirable work of annihilating those who collaborate with the insurgent groups" ("*invitamos a los colombianos de bien que queremos un país libre de subversión a que nos sigan apoyando en esta loable labor de aniquilar aquellos que colaboran con los grupos insurgentes*"). It also stated that "these people have been warned many times, but they have not paid any attention, thinking that we won't do what we say...." ("*en muchos casos se advirtieron a estas personas sin hacer caso creyendo que lo que decimos no lo cumplimos....*").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights defenders belonging to CREDHOS have suffered repeated death threats from army-backed paramilitary groups, who are increasingly gaining control in the city of Barrancabermeja.

Several members of the organization have been killed in the past and those who continue their work, have stated that they can only do so if the international community continues to support them.

The Colombian government has stated that it is committed to protecting human rights. Yet, it has so far failed to take effective measures to protect human rights defenders, nor to combat paramilitary groups in Barrancabermeja which continue to operate with impunity.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of CREDHOS members Pablo Javier Arenales, José Guillermo Larios and Yaneth Rubio Rodríguez following the death threat against them;
- calling for an immediate and exhaustive investigation to be carried out into this threat and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the Colombian government to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of those threatened, especially in light of the fact that the

Inter-American Human Rights Commission has called for precautionary measures to be taken to protect members of the human rights organization CREDHOS;

- urging the Colombian government to fully implement the UN *Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 9 December 1998;
- calling for the Colombian government to fulfill its promise to respect human rights by taking immediate action to combat paramilitary groups in Barrancabermeja which continue to operate with impunity;
- urging the Colombian government to adhere to the recommendations of the United Nations 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

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/284 2186/337 1351

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministero de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 4126 / 281 1213 / 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of the Fifth Brigade of the Colombian Army

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval

Cra. 33 # 14. Barrio Los Pinos

Bucaramanga, Santander

Colombia

Fax: +57 76-359189/334390

Salutation: Dear General/Sr. General

COPIES TO:Human rights organizations

CREDHOS

A.A 505

Barrancabermeja, Santander

Colombia

Reiniciar

AA 16284

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 17 October 2001.