

UA 243/01

Fear for Safety

24 September 2001

COLOMBIAOver DORADO CARDONA (m), Trade Unionist

Trade union leader, Over Dorado Cardona has reportedly been receiving death threats and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

On 19 September, as she was entering her home, Over Dorado's wife was reportedly stopped by three unidentified gunmen. They allegedly accused her husband of being a guerrilla and handed her a box containing a written death threat. They also told her that they were watching her husband and knew his whereabouts and movements.

The latest death threats against Over Dorado, come at a time when many public sector trade unionists are campaigning against governmental moves to privatize health and education services. Over Dorado has actively campaigned against plans to privatize education services and has previously had to ask for protection from the Ministry of Interior following earlier death threats.

Over Dorado is a trade union activist with the *Asociación de Institutores de Antioquia*, (ADIDA) Association of Teachers of Antioquia. ADIDA represents teachers who are under threat from either side in the Colombian conflict, before the *Comité Especial de Amenazados de la Secretaría de Educación de Antioquia*, Special Committee of Threatened Teachers of the Education Secretariat of Antioquia. The Committee seeks to provide support and protection for these teachers.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The security forces and their paramilitary allies often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. Those they accuse are frequently harassed, tortured and killed. At least 112 trade unionists were murdered during 2000, the majority by army-backed paramilitaries. In December 2000, Wilson Borja Díaz, a senior trade union leader fled the country after he was shot and wounded by gunmen, in an attack which judicial investigations have linked to several active and retired police officers (See UA 387/00, AMR 23/104/2000, 21 December 2000).

In 2001, over 90 trade unionists have been killed, the majority by army backed paramilitaries. On 15 February, 25 unionists affiliated to the Colombian Trade Union Congress (CUT), *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* occupied the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in protest at the threats, harassment and persecution they face.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Over Dorado and other members of ADIDA after he was reportedly threatened on 19 September 2001 by unidentified gunmen;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into threats against Over Dorado Cardona, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- asking the authorities what measures they are going to take to guarantee the safety of those at risk;

- 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

**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 the Interior

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

**Telegrams: Interior Minister, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 57 1 562 5298/ 562 9890**

**Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro**

National Advocate for the People

Defensor del Pueblo  
Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz  
Defensoría del Pueblo  
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: +57 1 640 0491**

**Salutation: Estimado Sr.**

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental organisation

Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos  
AA 22803  
Santafé 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 5 November 2001.