

COLOMBIA Members of the human rights organization *Corporación para la Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos REINICIAR*

Members of a human rights organization based in the capital, Bogotá, have received death threats, and Amnesty International believes they are in grave danger. The threats are thought to be related to their campaigning work on a high profile human rights case which is before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

In the last three months the organisation's telephone lines have reportedly been tapped or blocked. People entering or leaving the offices have reportedly been watched, and the leaders of the organization have been followed.

The non-governmental organization *Corporación para la Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos REINICIAR*, (REINICIAR Corporation for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights), assists people who have been displaced from the Magdalena Medio region. An anonymous woman reportedly telephoned the organization on 12 December, and joked that REINICIAR are the only human rights activists left alive: "*son ustedes los únicos que no están muertos, ja, ja, ja*" ("You are the only ones who aren't dead, ha, ha, ha"). Later that day when the human rights group tried to make a call to another city the call was cut off, and the same voice warned, "*ya está, ya está*" ("that's enough, that's enough").

During the night of 11 November, an anonymous caller told a REINICIAR member to hold the line and then played part of a song about death: "*Mañana será tu funeral en una carroza con flores blancas...*" ("tomorrow will be your funeral in a carriage with white flowers...") and then hung up.

REINICIAR has asked the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to investigate the persecution of the leftwing political movement *Unión Patriótica* (UP), Patriotic Union Party. UP activists have been particular targets for death threats, politically motivated killings and "disappearances" carried out by paramilitary groups. More than 3,000 UP members are believed to have been killed since the party was set up in 1985. The majority of the killings have been blamed on the security forces and army-backed paramilitary groups, and REINICIAR is campaigning for truth, justice and reparation for relatives of the victims. In the last four months REINICIAR has been helping UP members who have received threats or survived assassination attempts to move to safer regions of the country.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years, the security and armed forces have accused human rights workers and other civil society activists of being guerrilla sympathizers. In recent years, the security forces and their paramilitary allies have increasingly targeted human rights activists. As a result they have frequently been subjected to human rights violations and have received repeated death threats.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of REINICIAR members, who have received death threats and are apparently facing a campaign of harassment;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the threats and harassment, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;

- urging the authorities to take immediate and effective steps to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders in Bogotá, reminding them of their obligations to protect human rights defenders, as set out by the United Nations and the Organization of American States;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Bogotá and the surrounding area, 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 United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 287 7939 / 284 2186 / 289 3377****Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr Presidente**Minister of Interior

Dr. Humberto De La Calle

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 286 8025 / 284 0214**Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro**Minister of Foreign Relations

Dr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Palacio San Carlos

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 45209 MRRE CO**Faxes: + 57 1 282 5802 / 341 6777****Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister****COPIES TO:**Human Rights non-governmental organisation

Fundación Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Politicos (CSPP)

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 31 January 2001.