

UA 275/01

Fea.

COLOMBIA Gladys AVILA (f), Secretary General of the Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared (ASFADDES)
Gloria HERNEY (f), ASFADDES General Coordinator
Other human rights workers with ASFADDES

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Gladys Avila, Gloria Herney and other human rights defenders with the *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos*, (ASFADDES), Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared.

Following threatening telephone calls and months of constant surveillance by unknown individuals, ASFADDES workers had not gone into their Bogotá office on 21 October. At 8pm, Gladys Avila, Secretary General of ASFADDES, received an anonymous call at her home, in which the caller said: "*ah les dio miedo y no salieron las hijueputas*", "so you were scared and you didn't go out you sons-of-bitches". Using a mobile telephone provided by the Minister of Interior as a security measure, Gladys Avila telephoned her colleague Gloria Herney to warn her about what had just happened. Shortly after the call, the mobile telephone stopped working.

At 9pm, on the same day, Gloria Herney saw three men she did not know, waiting outside her building as she returned to her home. Feeling unsafe, she decided not to enter. In recent weeks anonymous telephone calls have been made to the ASFADDES office in which the callers ask whether Gloria Herney is at work, before hanging up.

In addition, interference is heard on the office telephones, raising concerns that they are being tapped. Criminal investigations into the forced "disappearance" of ASFADDES workers Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve in October 2000 in Medellín, have established that members of the security forces were illegally tapping ASFADDES's telephones in Medellín prior to their "disappearance".

Concerns are further heightened by the fact that these events, follow the circulation of a message on the Internet at the end of August, which declared that the *Grupo de Limpieza Urbana*, Urban Cleansing Group of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, would be starting a "clean-up campaign" (*campaña de limpieza*) to rid Colombia of people they believe to be urban guerrillas. The message was received by email by several non-governmental human rights organizations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ASFADDES is a non-governmental organization made up of relatives of people who have "disappeared" during the ongoing conflict in Colombia. It aims to discover what has happened to the "disappeared" and bring those responsible to justice. ASFADDES members, other human rights defenders and witnesses of human rights violations, have endured death threats, killings and disappearances at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies. In October 2000, Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve of the Medellín branch of ASFADDES "disappeared" (see UA 259/00, AMR 23/081/00, 9 October 2000). Their whereabouts remain unknown.

The security forces and their paramilitary allies have a policy of accusing human rights organizations of supporting or collaborating with the guerillas, so they can present them as legitimate military targets. At least 25 human rights defenders have been killed or "disappeared" in the last three years.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of human rights defenders Gladys Avila, Gloria Herney and others working with ASFADDES;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the threatening telephone calls, the possible telephone tapping of the ASFADDES offices and the constant surveillance faced by members of ASFADDES;
- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, are taken to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the recent paramilitary threats circulated via the Internet to a number of non-governmental organizations, urging that the results are made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the government to adhere to its obligations to protect human rights defenders, as set out by the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, and by the Organization of American States;
- asking the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

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 7434/562 9300

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro 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

Minister of Interior

Sr. Armando Estrada Villa

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

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960/286 8405/281 5884

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

Association of the Families of the Detained-Disappeared
ASFADDES
AA 011446
Bogotá

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 10 December 2001.