

PUBLIC

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UA 309/01

Fear for

**COLOMBIA**Aury Sara Marrugo (m), President of *Union Sindical Obrera (USO)*, Oil Workers' Trade Union, Cartagena Section

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Trade Union leader Aury Sara Marrugo, who has "disappeared" after reportedly being abducted by armed gunmen on 30 November. The kidnapping, follows some twenty days of threatening phone calls to *Union Sindical Obrera (USO)*, Oil Workers' Trade union members around Colombia.

According to reports, Aury Sara Marrugo was travelling with his bodyguard, from his home to the USO offices in Cartagena, Bolivar Department, when his car was stopped by three cars. He was then forcibly removed from his car by armed men, who are believed to be members of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)*, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia. His whereabouts remain unknown.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This kidnapping follows other recent threats and killings against USO trade unionists in the neighbouring department of Santander (see UA 170/01, AMR 23/067/01, 10 July 2001; UA 230/01 AMR 23/088/2001, 12 September 2001 and follow-ups) as well as the arrest of six USO leaders by the security forces on 19 October. The security and armed forces as well as their paramilitary allies often accuse trade unionists of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. In addition, paramilitaries frequently harass, torture and kill trade unionists. This year alone, around 143 trade unionists have been killed and at least 68 "disappeared". During 2000, 112 trade union leaders and members were murdered. In December 2000, a leading trade union leader, Wilson Borja Díaz, had to flee Colombia after he was shot and wounded by gunmen (see UA 387/00, AMR 23/104/00, 21 December 2000). Several active and retired police officers have been linked to the attack by judicial investigations.

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

- urging the authorities to order an independent, impartial and conclusive investigation into the possible "disappearance" of Aury Sara Marrugo and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of USO and other trade union activists in Cartagena and nationally following the possible "disappearance" of Aury Sara Marrugo, recent paramilitary killings and paramilitary death threats against the USO and other activists;
- asking the authorities what measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, 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 1 566 20 71**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio  
Fiscalía General de la Nación  
Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams:Attorney General, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Fax: +57 1 570 2000**  
**Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.**

Governor of the Department of Bolivar

Sr. Luis Daniel Vargas Sánchez  
Gobernación de Bolívar  
Calle 34 No. 4-21  
Cartagena, Bolívar, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams:Governor, Bolívar, Colombia**  
**Fax: +57 5 365 1594**  
**Salutation: Estimado Sr.Gobernador/Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Trade Union Confederation

*CUT, Nacional, Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia*  
Calle 35 N° 7-25, Piso 9  
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 14 January 2002.