

UA 327/01

Fear for safety/Possible extrajudicialexecution.

COLOMBIA Workers and trade unionists at the Cerámica Continental company

**Killed: Raúl OROZCO CASTAÑO, trade unionist
Juan Diego LONDOÑO Restrepo**

Paramilitary gunmen have killed two trade unionists at ceramics factory in Carmen del Viboral, Antioquia department, and threatened to kill the other workers there. The factory had recently been taken over by the *Asociación Sindical de la Industria de Cerámica de Antioquia* trade union.

On 14 December a group of heavily-armed men who said they were members of a paramilitary group came to the *Cerámicas Continental* factory and rounded up the workers. They asked when the trade union had been set up, and said it was backed by guerrilla groups. Others who have been accused of being guerrilla collaborators have frequently suffered serious human rights violations at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

The paramilitaries then reportedly forced trade unionist Raúl Orozco Castaño aside and executed him with a single shot to the head. Raúl Orozco had until recently been a member of the trade union's leadership and remained an active union member. The paramilitaries warned the other workers to leave the region, saying they were going to return to find the trade union's president and kill anyone else who was still there.

A month earlier a court had ordered the *Cerámicas Continental* company to hand over control of the factory to the union. Trade union members at the factory had been in dispute with the company owners since May 1997 and have received repeated death threats from paramilitary groups.

The trade union's secretary, Juan Diego Londoño Restrepo, was killed on 11 September 2001, reportedly by paramilitaries, while he was on his way to the factory.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Paramilitaries frequently harass, torture and kill trade unionists, whom they and the security and armed forces often accuse of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries. Around 156 trade unionists have been killed this year alone, and at least 68 have "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 undertake a full and impartial investigation into death threats against the *Asociación Sindical de la Industria de Cerámica de Antioquia*, and into the killings of Juan Diego Londoño Restrepo in September and Raúl Orozco Castaño in December, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of workers and trade unionists of the *Asociación Sindical de la Industria de Cerámica de Antioquia* and urging the

authorities to do everything deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;

- 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 the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351/ 286 7434/286 6842/284 2186

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52,Oficina 217, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram:Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 00 59

Salutation:Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Mayor of the Municipality of Carmen del Viboral

Dr Humberto Restrepo

Alcalde de Carmen del Viboral

Telegrams: Alcalde de Carmen del Viboral, Antioquia, Colombia

Salutation: Dear Mayor/Estimado Sr. Alcalde

COPIES TO:

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,

Defensor del Pueblo,Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 640 0491

Salutation: Estimado Sr.

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 1 February 2002.