

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "disappearance"

20 February 1995

COLOMBIA Rodrigo RODRÍGUEZ SIERRA, aged 35, trade union leader

Trade union leader Rodrigo Rodríguez Sierra was forcefully abducted on 16 February 1995 from a hotel in Barranquilla, Atlántico department, by armed men who identified themselves as members of the security forces. He has not been seen since and concern for his safety is growing by the day.

Witnesses report that Rodrigo Rodríguez was in the restaurant of the Hotel Diamante, located on Calle 41, No.38-65 of Barranquilla when, at approximately 7.45pm, a group of armed men entered the hotel. They identified themselves to the hotel's manager as members of the security forces and went immediately to the restaurant where they found Rodrigo Rodríguez. He was taken violently from the restaurant. No warrant for his arrest had been presented. The armed men reportedly stated that "he had problems with justice", "*tenía problemas con la justicia*".

From the moment of his abduction, his family and work colleagues made all possible efforts to locate him, without success. On 17 February, at 3.30pm, a writ of *habeas corpus* was submitted to the 12th Penal Judge of Barranquilla, *el Juez 12 Penal del Circuito de la ciudad de Barranquilla*.

Rodrigo Rodríguez is one the leaders of the olive-oil producers' union SINTRAPROACEITE, based in El Copey, Cesar department.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. Particular targets have been trade union and community leaders and members of left-wing parties. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the Colombian security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Rodrigo Rodríguez Sierra, who has not been seen since he was violently abducted from a Barranquilla hotel on 16 February, by armed men who identified themselves as members of the Colombian security forces;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into his whereabouts, the results of which should be made public and those found responsible for his abduction brought to justice;
- urging that, if he is in detention, that he be humanely treated, allowed access to lawyers and to his family and that he be released unless charged with a recognized criminal offence

APPEALS TO

- 1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 or 287 7939
Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) Procurator General:
 Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Procurador General Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723 or 281 7531
Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Vásquez

3) Attorney General
 Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia
Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes:+ 57 1 245 5292
Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights and Educational Organization
 Señores
 CINEP
 AA 25916
 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 April 1995.