

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 43/94 Harassment / Fear for Safety

10 February 1994

COLOMBIA: Lourdes CASTRO GARCÍA, lawyer (female)

Amnesty International has learned with concern of the serious harassment and veiled threats directed at Lourdes Castro García by members of the 13th Batallion of Military Police.

Lourdes Castro García is the lawyer acting for the defence of Francisco Galán, a left-wing guerrilla leader currently being held by the Colombian authorities at the 13th Batallion Military Police base, near Bogotá. According to reports, Lourdes Castro García has received persistent harassment on her visits to see the prisoner. She has repeatedly received verbal abuse from military personnel in charge of guarding her client. Remarks have included: "If you are Galán's lawyer, then you must share the same ideology" (*Usted para ser la abogada de Galán, debe tener su misma ideología*), "You reproach our work, do you by any chance justify the actions of the guerrillas?" (*"Usted reprocha nuestro trabajo, es que acaso legitima las acciones de la guerrilla?"*), and other verbal harassment.

Amnesty International believes that Lourdes Castro García's safety is undermined by this implication that the association between herself and her client goes beyond the strictly professional. This fear for her safety is heightened by the fact that suspected links with guerrilla organizations often lead to physical attacks, extrajudicial execution or "disappearance". Amnesty International believes that this behaviour by military personnel towards a lawyer carrying out her legitimate professional duties should not be tolerated by the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights lawyers and members of human rights organizations are increasingly at risk in Colombia. Abuses in recent years have included threats, harassment and, in some cases, "disappearance" and possible extrajudicial execution. During 1992 and 1993 human rights organizations increasingly came under verbal attack from senior military commanders. In several cases these verbal assaults were followed by physical attacks.

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

- expressing concern at the alleged harassment and intimidation of Lourdes Castro García by members of the 13th Batallion of the Military Police during her work as defence lawyer for an imprisoned guerrilla leader at the 13th Batallion Military Police base near Bogotá;
- urging that there be an inquiry into these allegations of harassment and intimidation, and that if these allegations are proved to be true, that those found responsible be duly sanctioned;
- urging that the authorities take all possible measures to protect the life of Lourdes Castro García, so that she can continue to conduct her legitimate professional duties without fear of reprisal.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324/7434; 287 7937

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Gaviria

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472

Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Arrieta

3) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939

Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff/Dear Dr. de Greiff

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:1) Human Rights and Educational Organization:

MINGA
 Apartado Aéreo 40303
 Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: +57 1 334 3765

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 24 March 1994.