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Fear for Safety

7 July 1995

**COLOMBIA**                    **Gabriel ADELFO RIAÑO PRIETO, university student  
and other members of student human rights committee**

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There is serious concern for the safety of Gabriel Adelfo Riaño Prieto and other student activists at the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia Seccional Bogotá*, Colombian National University Bogotá Section. It is feared that their activities in denouncing the recent killing of a fellow student and calling for his possible extrajudicial execution to be investigated may be putting their own safety at risk.

During the past week Gabriel Adelfo Riaño has been constantly harassed with telephone calls at his home. The anonymous callers, who claim to be colleagues at the Faculty of Law (to which Gabriel Adelfo Riaño belongs), ask which places he frequents, what his leisure activities are and where he works so that they can meet with him to complete academic work. They then tell him that his telephone is tapped, insult him and hang up. Enquiries at the university indicate that the calls have been made by agents external to the university.

Gabriel Adelfo Riaño is a member of the *Comité de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights of the National University of Colombia. The committee has denounced violations of human rights against students, including the recent killing of law student Humberto Peña Taylor. The telephone calls received by Gabriel Adelfo Riaño follow his involvement in campaigning activities organized by the university community. These activities include protest meetings, denouncements of Humberto Peña Taylor killing to the media and demonstrations calling for investigations.

Humberto Peña Taylor had himself been involved in human rights work at the university, and participated in several student demonstrations. During a demonstration in 1993 he was shot and seriously injured, and he was arrested on several occasions by the police and intelligence services. On 15 June 1995 Humberto Peña was killed by a man and a woman who shot him repeatedly in the Law Faculty's cafeteria, witnessed by several people. There was no attempt by university security personnel to arrest the two assassins, who students believe were working in collaboration with university security personnel and members of the security forces.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. Despite President Ernesto Samper Pizano's repeated pledges to protect human rights, to tackle impunity and guarantee the safety of human rights workers, members of the armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Trade unionists, popular leaders, civic activists and human rights workers are amongst those frequently targeted. 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 in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Gabriel Adelfo Riaño Prieto and other members of the *Comité de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos*;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into the intimidation faced by Gabriel Adelfo Riaño, that the results be made public and those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that all possible measures, deemed appropriate by Gabriel Adelfo Riaño Prieto and his colleagues on the committee, be undertaken in order to protect their lives, pointing out that such measures would be in line with governmental commitments to guarantee the safety of human rights workers;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the killing of Humberto Peña Taylor on 13 June 1995, that the results be made public and those responsible be brought to justice.

#### **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**

**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 (there may be taped office sounds, then engaged signal, then fax tone) / 281 7531 / 284 0472**

**Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Vásquez**

##### 3)Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
 Ministro de Gobierno  
 Ministerio de Gobierno  
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7  
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 8025 / 286 0053 / 286 0485**

**Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

##### 4) Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:**42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO  
**Faxes:**+ 57 1 222 1874/288 4906  
**Salutation:** Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Lawyers' Association:  
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados  
AA 44456  
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 20 August 1995.