

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Threats/Fear for Safety

27 July 1995

COLOMBIA

Pedro Barón and other peasant leaders

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Pedro Barón, president of the Tolima branch of the *Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), United Confederation of Workers, and other peasant leaders, who have been subjected to threats and intimidation by members of the security forces since the start of a strike and protest demonstration in Ibagué, Tolima department.

According to reports, agents belonging to the *Servicio de Investigaciones Judiciales e Inteligencia* (SIJIN), Judicial Investigation and Intelligence Service, and the F2 police intelligence service, part of the SIJIN, have threatened and harassed the leaders of the strike.

Coffee workers in the department of Tolima declared an indefinite strike from 19 July 1995 to demand that agreements made after a previous strike be respected. Approximately 4,000 coffee workers, together with their families, have occupied the Murillo Toro Park in the town of Ibagué. They have been demanding the right to demonstrate and protest peacefully without being forcibly removed by the security forces and have also been demanding that their lives and physical integrity be respected. The demonstrators are currently facing a shortage of food and medicines as the Ministry of Defence has reportedly ordered that the city of Ibagué should be blockaded and that no supplies should enter.

At 4.30pm on 21 July 11 coffee plantation workers involved in the strike were detained by the police. The strikers appealed to the *Defensoría del Pueblo*, Office of the People's Defender, who made enquiries into the detention of the workers and were informed that no one had been detained. All 11 were subsequently released.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including, arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, made several promises, both during his election campaign and subsequently, to improve the human rights situation. However, members of the Colombian security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtually total impunity. Civilians in areas of conflict are amongst those who have been the target of human rights violations. President Samper's promises include a commitment to end the impunity which benefits members of the security and paramilitary forces responsible for human rights violations.

#### 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 Pedro Barón and other peasant leaders involved in the strike by the *Confederación Unitaria de Trabajadores* in the town of Ibagué;
- urging that all the necessary measures be taken to protect the physical integrity of the strikers.

#### 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 1 289 3377/286 7434/287 7939**

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

2) Advocate for the People

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño  
Defensor del Pueblo  
Defensoría del Pueblo  
Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo,  
Bogota, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 57 1 346 1225/285 6908**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño**

3) Mayor of Ibagué

Dr. Alvaro Ramírez  
Ibagué, Tolima  
Colombia

**Faxes: + 57 82 619199**

**Salutation: Sr. Alcalde / Dear Mayor**

4) Governor of Tolima

Dr. Jaime Pardo

**Faxes: + 57 82 610882**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Human Rights Organization

SEMBRAR  
AA 34692  
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 7 September 1995.