

EXTERNAL

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Death threats / Fear for safety

11 October 1996

COLOMBIAGerardo Cajamarca, Bladimir Castañeda, Bladimir Álvarez, Mario Gutierrez, Henry Pérez, Fabio Pizza, Jose Ignacio Bermúdez, Pedro Pablo Suárez, Walter Murillo, Edgar Manuel Sarmiento, Fernando Chaves, Nohora Hernández (f), Alexis Torres, Julio Perez, Hector José Gómez, José Álvarez, Robert Cano, Leonardo Cruz, Maria Elcy Morales (f), Manuel Casallas, Sandra Pinzón Moscoso (f) and Jeovani Montejo

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The 22 civic leaders named above have been subjected to death threats and intimidation since they led a civic strike in the municipality of Facatativa, department of Cundinamarca, on 16 September 1996. Members of the security forces are reported to have labelled those participating in the strike as subversives, and referring to the 22, have threatened to "remove them" (*levantarlas*).

In recent days one of the 22, Nohora Hernández, received a written death threat in which she was warned that if she did not leave the municipality she would be killed. The names of all 22 civic leaders reportedly appear on a death list circulating in the municipality.

There are serious fears for the safety of the 22, given that in the past those labelled as subversives have subsequently become the victim of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances" or other human rights violations committed by the security forces or their paramilitaries allies.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Civic leaders and other popular activists have frequently been subjected to human rights violations by the security forces who accuse them of collaborating with guerrilla organizations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the 22 civic leaders (naming some or all) and calling for immediate measures deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;
- calling for prompt, full and impartial investigation into the death threat made against them, and the reported circulation of a death list on which their names appear, for the results to be made public, and those responsible to 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, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**  
**Faxes: + 57 1 289 3377/286 7434**  
**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper**

2) Attorney General  
Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Fiscalia General de la Nación  
Calle 35 No. 4-31  
Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939; 288 2828**  
**Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso**

3) Minister of Defence  
Dr. Juan Carlos Esguerra Portocarrero  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa, Bogota, Colombia**  
**Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

4) Advocate for the People:  
Dr. José Fernando Castro Caycedo  
Defensor del Pueblo  
Defensoría del Pueblo  
Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoria del Pueblo, Bogota, Colombia**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 346 1225/285 6908/288 6683**  
**Salutation: Estimado Dr Caycedo/Dear Dr Caycedo**

**COPIES TO:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace  
Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz  
AA 31861  
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 4 December 1996.