

COLOMBIAMembers of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*
(**José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective**)

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*, (José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective), following the public distribution of a poster calling for the "total annihilation" "*aniquilamiento institucional*" of the lawyers' association.

On 21 May, the poster was distributed around several universities in the country and at the Attorney General's office in Bogotá. It accused the association of being the "judicial arm", "*brazo jurídico*", of the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army. The poster also called for solidarity with army officials who are involved in cases of human rights abuses presented by the lawyers' association. To be labelled so explicitly as guerrilla collaborators is a major threat to the members of the association, as accusations of this kind are usually followed by serious human rights violations such as abductions, murders or torture.

In the past few months, several members of the *Colectivo de Abogados*, have also reportedly been kept under surveillance and have received anonymous phone calls. Members of the association have also received death threats on several occasions in the past. (See UA 88/01, AMR 23/043/2001, 6 April 2001 and UA 80/02, AMR 23/031/2002, 15 March 2002).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lawyers from the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*, are involved in bringing cases to trial which implicate army officials, who have taken part by action or omission in serious human rights violations such as the Maparipán massacre and the attempted killing of trade unionist Wilson Borja Díaz (see UA 387/00, AMR 23/104/00, 21 December 2000).

Many human rights lawyers have been killed in Colombia, and others have been forced into exile in fear for their lives. Human rights defenders who have sought to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations, and sought to expose the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups, have frequently suffered human rights violations themselves.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the Colombian authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* (José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective);
- asking them to take immediate and effective action to ensure that members of the association can carry out their legitimate and important work for the defence of human rights in safety;
- urging the government to adhere to the principles of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1998;
- reminding the authorities that in recognition of the important role human rights defenders play in promoting human rights throughout the Americas, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted on 4 June resolution AG/RES. 1842 (XXXII-O/02) "Human Rights Defenders in the Americas:

Support for the individuals, groups, and organisations of civil society working to promote and protect human rights in the Americas", urging states to take several steps to promote end protect the work of human rights activists.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: President Pastrana , Bogota, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022/2003 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,

Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior,
Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 5298 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'

Apartado Aéreo 33035, 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 26 July 2002.