

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/066/2002

UA 187/02

Fear for Safety

20 June 2002

COLOMBIA

Luis Enrique Imbachi (m), Acting President of *Sindicato de Trabajadores de las Empresas Municipales de Cali* (SINTRAEMCALI), Cali Municipal Service Workers Trade Union
Other members of SINTRAEMCALI

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Luis Enrique Imbachi, acting president of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de las Empresas Municipales de Cali* (SINTRAEMCALI), Cali Municipal Service Workers Trade Union, and other members of the trade union, following a reported attempt on his life in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department.

On 16 June, at approximately 9:30pm, Luis Enrique Imbachi was travelling in the vehicle assigned to him by the Ministry of the Interior's Protection Program. He was accompanied by his bodyguard, Ibaney González. According to reports, as his car travelled along the *Ciudad de Cali* Avenue, two motorcycles and a taxi followed at speed. They proceeded to go alongside and in front of the car and attempts were made to look inside.

After approximately one kilometre, the motorcyclist on the right of Luis Imbachi's car reportedly aimed a revolver at the rear right side of the car, where Luis was seated. Luis reportedly ordered his bodyguard to swerve into the motorcycle, which quickly sped away.

Ibaney González reportedly tried to contact the *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*, (DAS), Department of Administrative Security - the Colombian civilian intelligence service, by radio immediately following the apparent attempt on the life Luis Imbachi, but no one answered his calls. They then allegedly drove to the DAS offices to report the incident to the duty inspector.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Early this year, members of SINTRAEMCALI held a 36 day occupation of the Municipal Administration Centre (CAM) Building in Cali from 25 December 2001 to 31 January 2002 as part of the union's campaign against the privatization of Cali's electricity, water, sewage and telecommunications utilities.

During the occupation, SINTRAEMCALI members and their supporters were accused in the press, by members of the armed forces of having links with armed opposition groups in a "terrorist plot" to destabilize the city. The Army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self Defence Forces of Colombia, also declared members of SINTRAEMCALI to be "paramilitary targets" following the occupation.

The security and armed forces and their paramilitary allies have often accused trade unionists, of being guerrilla sympathizers. As a result trade unionists have frequently been harassed, tortured and killed, often by paramilitaries. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) recorded that in 2001 alone, over 160 trade unionists were murdered, and that harassment and violence is widespread. According to reports from the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), Colombian Trade Union Confederation, so far this year some 86 trade unionists have been killed the majority by army-backed paramilitaries.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Luis Enrique Imbachi and other SINTRAEMCALI members in Valle del Cauca;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk, and calling for the Ministry of Interior's protection program for trade unionists to be adequately resourced;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attempt against Luis Enrique Imbachi, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Valle del Cauca Department, and asking that the results of the investigation are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

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

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 334 1323

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,

Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: National Advocate, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 640 0491 / 346 1225

Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz

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

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 / 2017 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Nomadesc

AA 18621, 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 1 August 2002.