

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 44/002/2003

29 May 2003

Further Information on UA 113/03 (AMR 44/001/2003, 24 April 2003) Fear for safety/
"disappearance"/forcible return/ill-treatment

PANAMA/COLOMBIA

Juan Berrío (m)
Enrique Medrano (m)
Over 100 Colombian refugees

Amnesty International has just received reports that Colombian refugees Juan Berrío and Enrique Medrano have been located in Panamá and are reportedly in good health. The Panamanian Human Rights Ombudsman has called on the Panamanian government not to repatriate the two refugees. A representative from the Ombudsman's office has visited the two men, and was present when they were questioned by Panamanian authorities.

Over 100 refugees who were forcibly repatriated from Panamá remain in their native country of Colombia. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety and is seeking new information on their situation.

Juan Berrío and Enrique Medrano had not been seen since 21 April. They were reportedly abducted by Panamanian security forces as part of a campaign to forcibly repatriate Colombian refugees.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. We will continue to monitor this case. If possible, please send a final round of appeals, in Spanish or your own language:

To the Panamanian authorities:

- expressing concern for the safety of all Colombian refugees in Panamá;
- reminding the government of its legal obligations under international refugee law: as a state party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it must not forcibly return a person to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened (this is the principle of *non-refoulement* enshrined in article 33 (1));
- expressing concern that refugees should only be repatriated on the basis of their own voluntary and informed decision, in a manner which guarantees their safety and dignity;
- calling for the right of refugees to be given a clear choice between voluntary repatriation or access to individual assessment by the appropriate civilian authorities under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to be respected;
- urging the Panamanian authorities to refrain from further forced repatriations.

To the Colombian authorities:

- calling on the authorities to take action to guarantee the safety of any repatriated refugees, in accordance with the wishes of the refugees themselves.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Panamá

Señora Presidenta Mireya Moscoso

Presidente de la República de Panamá, Palacio Presidencial

Panamá 1, Republica de Panamá

E-mail: ofasin@presidencia.gob.pa

Fax: + 507 227 0076 (if someone answers, please say "fax, por favor")

Salutation: Excm. Sra. Presidenta Moscoso / Dear President Moscoso

Minister of Foreign Affairs in Panamá

Sr. Canciller Harmodio Arias Cerjack

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Altos de Ancón, Complejo Narciso Garay

Panamá, Zona 4, Republica de Panamá

Fax: + 507 211 0416 (please keep trying)

e-mail: prensa@mire.gob.pa

Salutation: Señor Ministro/Dear Minister

President of the Republic of Colombia

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: **Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia**

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592/ 337 58 90

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe / Dear President Uribe

Minister of Foreign Affairs in Colombia

Sra. María Carolina Barco Isakson,

Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores,

Calle 10 #5-51, Palacio San Carlos, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: **Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores, Bogotá, Colombia**

Fax: + 57 1 562 7822

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sra. Ministra

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz

AA1029, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Panama and Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 July 2003.