

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/006/2004

30 January 2004

Further Information on UA 144/02 (AMR 23/055/2002, 13 May 2002) and follow-up (AMR 23/068/2003, 21 October 2003) - Fear for safety/ Death Threats

COLOMBIA Yolanda Becerra (f), President of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP)
Popular Women=s Organization in Barrancabermeja, Santander department
Other Members of OFP

New Name: Inés Peña (f), aged 22

On 28 January, Inés Peña, the coordinator of the Documentation Centre at *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), the Popular Women's Organization, was forced by two armed men to get into a red van in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department. She was then threatened and tortured before being released.

As Inés Peña was driven around the city by the two men, who are thought to be army-backed paramilitaries, her feet were reportedly scolded with boiling water and her head shaved. As she was being tortured, she was told "*Para que se salga de esa OFP donde está metida...*" "That's because we want you out of OFP."

Other members of the OFP have also been attacked. On 27 January, a humanitarian delegation made up of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sailed from Barrancabermeja harbour to the municipality of San Pablo, in the south of Bolívar department. The delegation consisted of two members from the OFP, three from the *Consejo Noruego para los Refugiados* (the Norwegian Refugee Council), four from *Consejería en Proyectos* (the Project Counselling Service), and one from Peace Brigades International. They were going to San Pablo to monitor progress on a housing project for poor people, which is managed by the OFP.

During the trip, the delegation passed through an army checkpoint. Fifteen minutes later, several armed men on the right bank of the river made signals for them to stop by waving a white cloth. The delegation ignored the signals which resulted in the armed men firing shots at the boat. The delegation managed to escape without injury and reported the attack to the authorities. It is not known however, whether an investigation into the incident is being carried out.

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

- expressing concern at the targeting of human rights defenders in Barrancabermeja, Santander department
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the 27 January 2004 attack on the humanitarian delegation which included members of *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP) and other non-government organizations (NGOs) as well as the 28 January attack on Inés Peña;
- calling for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of members of OFP, so they may continue their legitimate work for the defence and promotion of human rights;
- urging the government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and in repeated resolutions by the Organization of American States; that they should take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Santander department, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592 / 337 5890

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

Governor of Santander Department

Señor Hugo Heliodoro Aguilar Naranjo,

Gobernador del Departamento de Santander,

Gobernación de Santander,

Calle 37, No. 10-30,

Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 33 9889

Salutation: Dear Governor/ Sr. Gobernador

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite)

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 / 2000 (you will hear a message in Spanish asking you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Popular women's organization

Organización Femenina Popular

Cra 22 No 52B – 36

Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 12 March 2004.