

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 132/05 (AMR 23/015/2005, 20 May 2005) Fear for safety/death threats

COLOMBIA **Hollman Morris (m), journalist**
 Carlos Lozano (m), journalist
 Daniel Coronell (m), journalist

New names: Javier Giraldo Moreno (m), priest, human rights defender
 Gloria Cuartas (f), former Senatorial candidate

A video apparently made by a new paramilitary group has identified journalist Hollman Morris and three others as "military targets", accusing them of being members or agents of guerrilla forces. The video amounts to a death threat, and Amnesty International fears that their lives are in grave danger.

The video was allegedly distributed by members of the military, primarily to university students in the capital, Bogotá, at the beginning of March 2006, in the run-up to that month's elections for the Senate. Hollman Morris, who is the director of the investigative television programme CONTRAVIA, was given a copy of the video on 9 March by one of the other people named in it, Gloria Cuartas, a leader of a leftwing political group who was running for election and has been an outspoken critic of human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. The video was apparently produced by a new nationwide paramilitary group, the *Frente Social por la Paz* (Social Front for Peace). As well as Hollman Morris and Gloria Cuartas, it names priest Javier Giraldo Moreno, a prominent human rights defender who has criticized human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies, and also a second politician; it has not yet been possible to confirm that he wants Amnesty International to take action on his behalf.

In the video, the *Frente Social por la Paz* have followed the usual technique of army-backed paramilitary groups, accusing those who campaign for justice in cases of human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies of being members or agents of the guerrilla forces, and thus legitimate targets for attack.

On 16 May 2005, Hollman Morris and two other journalists, Carlos Lozano and Daniel Coronell, received death threats in the form of funeral wreaths. Although the government has publicly condemned the threats against the three journalists and has since provided them with extra security, AI has no information as to whether the investigations into these threats have produced any results, yet the fact remains that those responsible have not been brought to justice. Daniel Coronell and his family have since left Colombia to seek refuge in the United States.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

An internal conflict has raged in Colombia over the last four decades between guerrilla forces and government security forces. The armed forces' counter-insurgency strategy has relied heavily on paramilitary groups to implement their "dirty war" tactics, which include torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions. Their targets are supposedly guerrillas or suspected guerrillas, but they often apply this label to people such as trade unionists and human rights activists that they want to silence. Guerrilla forces have intimidated or killed people they accuse of collaborating with their enemies, including human rights defenders, and have engaged in kidnapping and hostage-taking.

In Colombia journalists, human rights defenders, elected officials and election candidates are frequently threatened or killed. Those campaigning for justice in cases of human rights violations committed by the

security forces and their paramilitary allies have themselves frequently been threatened or killed by armed groups in Colombia's internal conflict, who accuse them of collaborating with their enemies.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Hollman Morris, Javier Giraldo Moreno and Gloria Cuartas, who were reportedly identified as "military targets" in a video produced by the paramilitary group *Frente Social por la Paz*;
- urging the authorities to take action to guarantee their safety, and provide them with adequate protection in accordance with their wishes, so they can continue their legitimate work in safety;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the threats made against Hollman Morris, Javier Giraldo Moreno, and Gloria Cuartas in the video, and the alleged involvement of members of the military in distributing it, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice in line with the human rights recommendations of the United Nations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890

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

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Sabas Pretelt de la Vega,

Ministro del Interior y de Justicia

Ministerio del Interior

Av. Jiménez No 8-89

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 560 4630

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Iguarán

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01, Edificio C Piso 4

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 414 9108

Salutation: Dear Dr. Iguarán / Estimado Dr. Iguarán

COPIES 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 19 May 2006.