

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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PLEASE SEND UP TO TEN APPEALS PER SECTION

UA 143/91 Death Threats/Fear of Extrajudicial Execution 29 April 1991

COLOMBIA : Elkin de Jesús LOPEZ OSPINA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Elkin de Jesús López Ospina, who is a peasant leader and an active member of the Comité Municipal de Defensa, Protección y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, Municipal Committee for the Defence, Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, in the municipality of Tibú, North Santander Department.

Elkin de Jesús López Ospina has reportedly been subjected for a number of years to harassment by the security forces who have accused him of links with guerrilla organizations. On 18 April 1991 he presented a complaint to the Personero Municipal, municipal ombudsman for human rights, in Tibú, stating that since the beginning of the month he has received death threats from a paramilitary group believed to be linked to the Colombian army who recently arrived in the area from Ocaña also in North Santander Department.

In 1970, when he was a well known peasant leader in the Catatumbo region, Elkin de Jesús López Ospina was forced to leave Santander after reportedly receiving repeated threats against his life from the security forces. He returned to the region in 1980 since when he alleges that the threats against him have continued: in July 1984, his farm was subjected to a three-day military operation on the grounds that a guerrilla group were camping there; in 1987, his name as well as those of several other civic leaders appeared on a leaflet accusing them of links with guerrillas after they had participated in a strike; in June 1989 he survived an attempt on his life in Tibú by gunmen who were allegedly acting on behalf of the army; and in August 1989, he learned that two army commanders from North Santander Department had made statements to the effect that they were going to kill him because "he is the brains behind the guerrilla organizations in Catatumbo" ("es el cerebro de las organizaciones guerrilleras del Catatumbo").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights violations are occurring on an increasing scale in Colombia against a background of escalating civil conflict and drugs-related violence. The local civilian population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and civilians working for them. Principal victims have included civic and community leaders and members of legal left-wing parties.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that an immediate investigation be conducted into reports that since the beginning of April 1991 Elkin de Jesús López Ospina has received renewed threats against his life from a paramilitary group allegedly linked to the security forces that has recently arrived in the area from Ocaña;

- requesting that the necessary steps be taken to ensure his safety.

APPEALS TO

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324

+ 57 1 287 7937

+ 57 1 283 3066

Dr Gustavo Arrieta
Procurador General de la Nación
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5 No. 15-80
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

General Oscar Botero Restrepo
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 2401

COPIES TO:

Señores
CSPP
AA 22803
Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 June 1991.