

UA 88/01

Fear for

COLOMBIA Dr Alirio URIBE MUÑOZ, human rights lawyer
Other members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*

A suspect in the attempted assassination of a prominent trade unionist is now known to have kept information on human rights lawyer Dr Alirio Uribe Muñoz. Amnesty International is concerned that an attempt on his life is being planned.

Judicial investigations have linked several active and retired police and army officers to the December 2000 attack on trade unionist Wilson Borja Díaz (see UA 387/00, AMR 23/104/00, 21 December 2000). During a search of the house of one of the suspects, a retired army corporal, a photo of Dr Uribe was found, together with his home and office details. The suspect is reportedly linked to military intelligence. Both Dr Uribe and Wilson Borja were named on three death lists circulated in Bogotá.

Evidence is emerging in the judicial investigations which suggests that the same group of suspects is linked to other attacks and murders of high-profile political figures in Colombia.

Dr Uribe is a member of a lawyers' collective in Bogotá that works on human rights cases, the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* (José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective).

He has faced continuous harassment for some time, which has increased markedly in the past few months. He has been followed several times by men on motorbikes without numberplates. After he published a report denouncing clear links between the security forces and illegal paramilitary groups in Barrancabermeja, central Colombia, he began receiving suspicious phone calls.

Alirio Uribe is a law lecturer at a university, where leaflets threatening several teachers and mentioning the *Colectivo de Abogados* have been circulated.

Other members of the Collective have also been threatened, including lawyer Oscar Rodas Villegas. In January 2001 his girlfriend was forced into a car, gagged and blindfolded. Her captors took her to a house where they beat her. They let her go with a warning to Oscar Rodas Villegas to stop his work (see UA 31/01, AMR 23/012/2001, 2 February 2001).

The *Colectivo de Abogados* has asked the Inter-American Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States to ensure that Alirio Uribe is protected by the Colombian government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many human rights lawyers have been killed in Colombia, and others have been forced into exile in fear for their lives. Human rights defenders who have sought to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations, and sought to expose the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups, have frequently suffered human rights violations themselves.

Paramilitary groups backed by the army have killed several thousand civilians in the past five years alone, and continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- urging the Colombian authorities to take immediate and effective action to protect Dr Alirio Uribe Muñoz;
- expressing concern that a suspect in the attempted murder of Wilson Borja Díaz also kept information on Dr Uribe, and asking them to investigate thoroughly;
- asking them also to take immediate and effective action to ensure that other members of the *Colectivo de Abogados* can carry out their legitimate and important work for the defence of human rights in safety;
- reminding the authorities of their obligations to human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* adopted on 9 December 1998, the Organization of American States *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted on 7 June 1999 [AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99)] and in line with repeated recommendations made by the UN to the Colombian government to take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and UN recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Vice-President of the Republic

Señor Vicepresidente Gustavo Bell Lemus
 Alto Consejero Presidencial para asuntos de Derechos Humanos y lucha Contra la Corrupción
 Cra. 8 #7-26, Palacio de Nariño,
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 337 1350 / 337 1351

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente / Dear Vice-President

Minister of Interior

Sr. Armando Estrada Villa
 Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Palacio Echeverry
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o., Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

COPIES TO:

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'
 Apartado Aéreo 33035
 Santafé de 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 18 May 2001.