

EXTERNAL

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Fear for Safety

15 August 1995

COLOMBIA Domingo Rafael TOVAR ARRIETA, trade unionist

~~Jorge ORTEGA GARCÍA, trade unionist~~

Domingo Rafael Tovar Arrieta and Jorge Ortega García, members of the *Junta Nacional de la Central Unitaria de Trabajadores* (CUT), National Executive of the United Confederation of Workers, are reported to have received death threats.

On 8 August 1995, Domingo Rafael Tovar reportedly received a "*sufragio*", a written death threat, at the CUT's headquarters in Bogotá, warning him that he would be killed for his trade union activity. Reports indicate that Domingo Rafael Tovar moved to Bogotá after an attempt on his life and after intimidation by the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Sucre.

According to information received, Jorge Ortega García has been subjected to telephoned death threats in recent days, and has been kept under surveillance at his office and followed by members of the security forces.

On 12 February 1994, members of the army's *XIII Brigada*, XIII Brigade, reportedly detained Jorge García and Domingo Rafael, accusing them of "rebellion". Judicial authorities later ordered their release. There is serious concern for the two trade unionists given that individuals who are labelled subversives or accused of being subversives by the security forces are often the target of human rights violations carried out by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Furthermore, in the past, individuals who have faced death threats and intimidation have often become the target of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance" and other forms of human rights violation.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights and to tackle impunity. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Trade unionist, popular leaders, civic activists and human rights workers are amongst those frequently the target of human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jorge Ortega García and Domingo Rafael Tovar Arrieta who have recently received death threats;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into the threats, that the results be made public and those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that all possible measures, deemed appropriate by Jorge Ortega García and Domingo Rafael Tovar Arrieta, be undertaken to protect their lives.

#### APPEALS TO:

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 289 3377 / 286 7434**

**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper**

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez  
 Procurador General de la Nación  
 Procuraduría General  
 Edificio Banco Ganadero  
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Procurador General Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723 (there may be taped office sounds, then engaged signal,  
 then fax tone) / 281 7531**

**Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Vásquez**

3)Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
 Ministro de Gobierno  
 Ministerio de Gobierno  
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7  
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 8025 / 286 0053 / 286 0485**

**Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

4) Minister of Defence

Dr.Juan Carlos Esguerra  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa , Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**Lawyers' Association:

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados  
 AA 44456  
 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 3 October 1995.



