

PUBLIC

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Fear for

COLOMBIAEfraín Pardo Moreno, trade union leader
Tulia Sofía Vargas, wife of assassinated trade union leader Alfonso Poveda
Guata
Liudmila Poveda]Daughters of Alfonso Poveda Guata
Flor Edith Poveda]and Tulia Sofía Vargas

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of all those named above, who have been harassed and threatened following the killing of prominent trade union leader Alfonso Poveda Guata earlier this year. Efraín Pardo Moreno, Liudmila Poveda and Flor Edith Poveda have recently received a written death threat warning them not to cooperate with the judicial investigation into his killing.

Alfonso Poveda Guata, veteran communist party member and leader of the trade union *Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Agrarias* (FENACOA), National Federation of Agrarian Cooperatives, was killed as he was on his way to work in Bogotá on 17 February 1999. The judicial investigation into his killing is believed to have uncovered evidence that paramilitaries were responsible.

Tulia Sofía Vargas, his wife, was with him when he died. Since then, she and her daughter Flor Edith Poveda Vargas have received threatening phone calls and been followed repeatedly by armed men in civilian clothes, believed to be working for the security forces. Although they reported this to the authorities on 21 April 1999, the surveillance and harassment has continued.

The death threat recently delivered to Liudmila Poveda, her sister Flor Edith Poveda and Efraín Pardo Moreno, the new leader of FENACOA, was signed "AU", which stands for *Autodefensas Unidas*, United Self-defence Forces, the national paramilitary alliance responsible massive human rights violations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For many years trade unionists, human rights workers, members of legal opposition groups and popular activists in Colombia have been accused of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries by the security and armed forces. Such accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations, often perpetrated by the security forces' paramilitary allies. Relatives of victims of human rights violations who campaign for justice are often themselves targeted in order to protect the impunity of those responsible for human rights violations.

Although in 1989 the government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups, they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country. The Attorney General recently said that the security forces had not acted on more than 200 outstanding arrest warrants issued against alleged paramilitary members responsible for widespread human rights violations. So far, the government of Andrés Pastrana has failed to take effective steps to tackle the country's long running human rights crisis.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Efraín Pardo Moreno, Tulia Sofía Vargas, Liudmila Poveda and Flor Edith Poveda, who have received death threats;

- urging the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;
- urging that a full and impartial investigation is carried out into the killing of Julio Alfonso Poveda Guata on 17 February 1999 and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the campaign of threats and harassment against Efraín Pardo Moreno, Tulia Sofía Vargas, Liudmila Poveda and Flor Edith Poveda, which is apparently intended to hamper the investigation into the killing of Julio Alfonso Poveda Guata, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the Colombian government to act on its commitments to dismantle paramilitary organizations and to bring to justice all members of the security forces found to have links with such organizations.

APPEALS TO:President of Colombia:

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

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

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Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax:+ 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5884

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.

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 11 August 1999.