

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/66/95

UA 244/95

Death Threats / Fear for Safety

25 October 1995

COLOMBIAAlejandro BERNAL

Maurizio CARVAJAL

Edgar RODRÍGUEZ

Ana Julia BECERRA

Yuly GONZÁLEZ

Doris JURADO

Alvaro PULIDO

Enrique HERNÁNDEZ

José JUNCO

Iván FERREIRA - all leading trade unionists

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of ten trade union leaders, following death threats made against them by a paramilitary group.

In a leaflet delivered to the offices of the *Unión de Empleados Bancarios (UNEB)*, Union of Bank Employees, in Bogotá, on 18 October 1995, the above-named were accused of being members of guerrilla groups and threatened with death. The leaflet was signed by the paramilitary group MACOGUE, the acronym of *Muerte a los Comunistas y Guerrilleros*, Death to Communists and Guerrillas.

These latest threats coincide with the presentation of a series of demands concerning working conditions by staff members of several major banks in Colombia. Some of the union leaders are also already involved in negotiations with two others banks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death threats described above are the latest in a recent wave of threats of this kind made by paramilitary groups against members of trade unions in Colombia, including members of the *Unión Sindical de Obreros (USO)*, Workers' Trade Union, the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT)*, United Confederation of Workers' Leaders, and the *Federación Unitaria de Trabajadores de Antioquia (FUTRAN)*, United Workers' Federation of Antioquia (see UA 202/95, 15 August 1995 and follow-ups (1), 12 October 1995, and (2), 24 October 1995).

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary arrests. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protecting human rights and to tackling impunity. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity.

Trade unionists, popular leaders, civic activists and human rights workers are among 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 and airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:

- urging that all possible steps be taken to adequately ensure the safety of the ten trade unionists named above, following the threats on their lives;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the threats, asking that the results be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- asking that the rights of trade union members to carry out legitimate trade union activity without fear of persecution be guaranteed;
- repeating appeals for the authorities to take immediate measures towards ending the activities of paramilitary groups, in accordance with stated governmental commitments.

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 5 December 1995.