

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/83/94

Distr: UA/SC

UA 387/94

Fear for Safety

27 October 1994

COLOMBIA

Luis Guillermo PEREZ CASAS, human rights lawyer

Pedro Julio MAHECHA AVILA, human rights lawyer

On 26 October 1994, two men on an unmarked motorcycle followed human rights lawyer Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas to his office in Santafé de Bogotá and then followed his family to his son's school gates. The men only left when police assistance was summoned.

Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas works for the lawyers collective "*Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CCA)*". The CCA reports that similar incidents have occurred frequently during the last three weeks and there is renewed concern for the safety of those who work for the CCA, in particular lawyers Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas and Pedro Julio Mahecha Avila.

The CCA is working on numerous important cases of human rights violations in Colombia in which members of the police and army are implicated and its lawyers have been subjected to death threats and harassment because of their work in the past. The serious nature of the intimidation led to the CCA's President, Rafael Barrios, leaving Colombia for a place of safety in October 1993 for six months. Further incidents of intimidation were reported in May 1994. (Please refer to UA 297/93 (AMR 23/51/93), UA 108/94 (AMR 23/28/94) and UA 182/94 and Follow-up (AMR 23/37/94 and AMR 23/60/94)).

On 9 September 1994, President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who took office on 7 August, declared in a speech that his government "would seek to have constructive relations with human rights organizations with the aim of suppressing human rights violations and would do everything necessary to protect the lives and integrity of human rights workers. *"Buscará sostener con los organismos de derechos humanos relaciones constructivas en procura de suprimir las violaciones de tales derechos y pondrá de su parte cuanto sea necesario para proteger la vida y la integridad de sus miembros"*.

The CCA states that they have met many times with government authorities to put their concerns to them and have put forward practical suggestions for measures which would offer them more protection. They state that they have not yet received any adequate response and none of the measures of protection requested have been granted. Amnesty International calls upon President Samper to stand by his commitment and ensure that these and all other human rights workers can carry out their lawful activities without fear for their or for their family's lives.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. Particular targets have been human rights workers and community and trade union leaders. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the

Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. 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 either in Spanish or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of human rights lawyers working for the lawyers collective "*Corporación Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CCA)*", in particular Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas and Pedro Julio Mahecha Avila, following reports that they are again being intimidated;
- urging that these reports be investigated, the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that concrete measures, deemed appropriate to those concerned, be taken to protect the lives of those working for the CCA and their families in line with the commitment made by President Samper to ensure the safety of human rights workers.

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

Tx: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 7186

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 9723/281 7531

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

3) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 288 2828/211 6678

Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

4) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño
 Defensor del Pueblo
 Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo,
Bogota, Colombia**

Faxes:+ 57 1 288 6683

Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Lawyers' Association:

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados

AA 44456

Santa Fé 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 8 December 1994.