

COLOMBIA **Diego Osorio**, (m) President of the *Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*, CUT, Colombian Trade Union Confederation Risaralda section;
Carlos Valencia (m), board treasurer, CUT Risaralda section;
Aide Trujillo (f), Presidente of the *Sindicato de Educadores de Risaralda*, SER, Risaralda Teachers Union;
Rodrigo López (m), Vice-President, SER;
Vicente Villada (m), board treasurer, SER;
Gerardo Santibáñez (m), Secretary General, *Sindicato de Trabajadores de Las Empresas Públicas*, SINTRAEMSDES, Public Sector Trade Union;

Guillermo Cardona (m), President, *Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos Seccional Risaralda*, CPDH, Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, Risaralda Section;
Domingo Taborda (m), Vice-President, CPDH Risaralda Section;
Adriana González (f), Secretary General, CPDH Risaralda Section;
María Teresa Henao (f), member CPDH, Risaralda Section;
Gustavo Marín (m), member CPDH, Risaralda Section;
Dover Hoyos (m), member CPDH, Risaralda Section;
Hernando Aguirre (m), member CPDH, Risaralda Section
and other activists with the CUT, SER, SINTRAEMSDES and CPDH

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for members of trade unions and non-governmental human rights organizations operating in the central coffee-producing Risaralda Department, following death threats against the 13 people named above.

On 21 August, a leaflet was reportedly sent by fax to the offices of the *Sindicato de Educadores de Risaralda*, SER, Risaralda Teacher's Union. It was signed by the *Bloque Cacique Calarcá*, Calarcá Cacique Bloc of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, an army-backed paramilitary organization. The leaflet urged all those named above, all activists with either the CUT, SER, SINTRAEMSDES or CPDH to leave the region in no more than 15 days, or the units of the Calarcá Bloc would be forced to take action against them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Trade unionists and human rights defenders have frequently been harassed, tortured and killed by paramilitaries who, together with the security and armed forces, have often accused them of being guerrilla sympathizers. According to reports from the CUT, so far this year some 89 trade unionists have been killed, the majority by army-backed paramilitaries.

Members of SINTRAEMSDES have been threatened in the past (see UA 44/01, AMR 23/020/01, 16 February 2001). According to information from SINTRAEMSDES, last year two of its members were killed in suspicious circumstances. The body of one showed signs of torture.

The threats against such a large number of human rights defenders and trade unionists come at a time when their organizations are campaigning against the labour and social security reforms of the new government and when the CPDH, Risaralda Section, continues to denounce the increase of paramilitary activity in the department and the entire coffee-producing region.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the people named above and other activists of the CUT, SER, SINTRAEMSDDES and CPDH in the Department of Risaralda following the recent threats;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk, and calling for the Ministry of Interior's protection program for trade unionists and human rights defenders to be adequately resourced in order to take effective measures;
- urging for an independent, impartial and conclusive investigation to be carried out into the threats with those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 571 3420592

Salutation: Dear President Uribe / Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Dr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos

Ministro del Interior y Justicia, Ministerio del Interior y Justicia,

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 599 8404/ 571 5664573

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Human Rights Ombudsman

Dr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: Defensor del Pueblo, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 640 0491

Salutation: Dear Dr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Dr. Cifuentes Muñoz

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Comité Permanente por los Derechos Humanos - CPDH

A.A. 12817

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 9 October 2002.