

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 180/02 (AMR 23/064/2002, 14 June 2002) Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Diana Milena Murcia (f)
Javier Alejandro Acevedo (m)
and other members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* ('José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective)

Human rights lawyer Diana Milena Murcia has reportedly received threats after her personal emails were apparently intercepted. Other members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*, ('José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective) in the capital Bogotá have also reported an increase in surveillance and have reportedly been followed by unidentified vehicles. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

On 12 November, Diana Milena Murcia sent a message from her personal e-mail account to some close friends. She attached to the message a page from the national newspaper *El Tiempo* which included a cartoon parodying the new government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. Two days later she received a threatening message in her personal e-mail account which stated: "*me parece una insolencia su pirrico y mal habido 'humor negro' ... se cree muy chistosa, al vituperar de esa forma a l@s sap@s y ran@s de nuestro país? ... Espero que tome este mensaje como un campanazo de alerta para que mida sus palabras, 'pensaríamos que sería una buena acción de resarcimiento, que ud. rotara un documento, cualquiera, el que más le agrada, de la página www.colombialibre.org 'p.d Lo de la página de colombialibre ES UNA TAREA QUE ESPERAMOS QUE CUMPLA'* ('Your Pyrrhic and ill-gotten 'black humour' is insolent ... Do you think you are funny, condemning in this way the everyone in our country? I hope you take this message as an alarm bell so that in the future you measure your words... we think that it would be a good act of reparation if you circulated a document, any one, whichever you like best, from the page www.colombialibre.org [the Website of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) paramilitary group]... P.S. about the colombialibre page – THIS IS A TASK THAT WE HOPE WILL BE CARRIED OUT').

The message appears to show that Diana Milena Murcia's personal email has been intercepted. Members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* have also noticed other apparent changes to their electronic communications. For some time, emails were apparently externally reconfigured so that, when printed out, they appeared not to be from the lawyers' organization but from 'Irish 2' ('irlandeses 2'). This probably refers to the case of the three Irishmen who are currently detained in Colombia on charges of training the FARC guerrilla group and possessing false passports. The *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* is working on behalf of one of these men, at the request of the Irish Embassy in Mexico and the families of those concerned.

In addition, several members of the collective have noticed that they have been kept under increasing surveillance. On 19 November, human rights lawyer Javier Alejandro Acevedo was apparently followed home by a blue Nissan patrol van. On other occasions he reported that he had been followed home by unidentified individuals on motorcycles without registration plates.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lawyers from the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'* are involved in bringing cases to trial which implicate army officials, who have taken part by action or omission in serious human rights violations. Many human rights lawyers have been killed in Colombia, and others have been forced into exile in fear of their lives.

Members of the organization have also received death threats on several occasions in the past (See UA 88/01, AMR 23/043/2001, 6 April 2001 and UA 80/02, AMR 23/031/2002, 15 March 2002).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Javier Alejandro Acevedo, Diana Milena Murcia and other members of the *Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'*;
- urging the Colombian authorities to take effective action to protect members of the organization in line with measures requested by those at risk, thus allowing them to safely continue their legitimate and important work on the defence of human rights;
- calling for the government to investigate all cases of threats against human rights defenders and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging the government to fully implement the principles of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998;
- calling on the government to initiate a meaningful dialogue with human rights defenders to address issues of their protection and the prevention of attacks against them.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Dr. 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 1 342 0592

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

Vice-President of the Republic

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón

Vicepresidente de la República

Vicepresidencia

Carrera 8A No 5-57

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Vicepresidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 334 11 38

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente / Dear Vice-President

Minister of Defence

Martha Lucía Ramírez de Rincon

Ministra de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52 OFI. 217

Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN)

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministra de Defensa Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 266 0193
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective
Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo',
Edificio de Avianca Piso 25
Oficina 2506
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 2824270

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 13 January 2003.