

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/18/99

19 February 1999

Further information on Extra 12/99 (AMR 23/04/99, 29 January 1999) and follow-ups (AMR 23/11/99, 4 February 1999; AMR 23/13/99, 9 February 1999) - Fear for safety/"Disappearance"

COLOMBIA	Jairo BEDOYA - released]	
	Olga RODAS (F) - released]	Human rights workers
	Jorge SALAZAR - released]	
	Claudia Tamayo (f) - released]	

Jorge Salazar and Jairo Bedoya, the two human rights defenders still held hostage by paramilitary forces, were released on 18 February 1999. They had been held hostage, along with Claudia Tamayo and Olga Rodas, by the national paramilitary organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia. Claudia Tamayo and Olga Rodas were released on 8 February.

All four work for the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, a long established and internationally respected non-governmental human rights organization specializing in research, popular education and peace promotion. They were abducted from the organisation's offices in Medellín, capital of Antioquia Department, on 28 January 1999.

On 1 February the head of AUC, Carlos Castaño, threatened all Colombian human rights defenders, saying: "We have respected the majority [of defenders]...even though we know who they are and where they are. But enough is enough!... We do not want to create panic in the NGOs, but we do call for a purge of guerrillas from said organizations, a call extended to the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's Office." ("*Aún así hemos respetado la gran mayoría, conociendo quienes son y dónde están. Basta ya!... No deseamos crear pánico al interior de las ONG, pero hacemos un llamado a que se depure de guerrilleros la composición de dicha organizaciones, llamado extensivo la Unidad de Derechos Humanos de la Fiscalía*").

Following the release of Jairo Bedoya and Jorge Salazar, the AUC reportedly issued a statement in which it once again accused the two men of being members of guerrilla organizations. Human rights defenders are frequently labelled guerilla auxiliaries or supporters by the armed forces and their paramilitary allies, in an attempt to undermine their work and present them as legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war. IPC workers are therefore still at risk.

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

- condemning the abduction by the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, of Jairo Bedoya, Olga Rodas, Jorge Salazar and Claudia Tamayo, all of whom have now been released, from the offices of the *Instituto Popular de Capacitación* (IPC), Popular Training Institute, in Medellín, capital of Antioquia Department;
- expressing grave concern for the safety of IPC workers and all human rights defenders after the threats made by the AUC, and asking for improved protection in line with United Nations recommendations and government commitments;

- expressing concern that the recent abduction and killing of Colombian human rights defenders demonstrate that government steps to protect them are insufficient and ineffective;
- saying that human rights defenders will continue to be the targets of attacks by paramilitaries unless effective action is taken to dismantle paramilitary groups in line with UN recommendations.

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

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence, Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, 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

Minister of the Interior, Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405 / 286 0053 / 341 9739

If possible please also write to your own government as per the recommendations above, underlining that effective measures by the government to ensure the safety of human rights defenders and to dismantle paramilitary groups would be in line with UN recommendations.

COPIES TO: Instituto Popular de Capacitación (IPC), Apartado Aéreo 9690, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

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 2 April 1999.