

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/043/2007

12 November 2007

UA 303/07

Fear for safety

COLOMBIA

Members of the non-governmental human rights organization Corporación REINICIAR

Staff working for the non-governmental human rights organization Corporación Reiniciar, and those on whose behalf they work, are in danger, following a break-in at their office in the capital, Bogotá.

On the morning of 6 November, staff members of the Corporación Reiniciar arrived at the office and discovered that there had been a break-in. The staff reported that locks had been forced on file cupboards and some of the desk drawers. The staff found that a file about the enforced disappearance of a member of the left-wing political party, *Unión Patriótica* (UP), Patriotic Union was missing. Members of the army have been linked to this particular case. Corporación Reiniciar has campaigned for justice for the families of over 3,000 members of the UP who have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance since the party was formed in 1985, mostly at the hands of the security forces and army-backed paramilitaries.

The intruders left a piece of black ribbon in one of the cupboards they had forced open. Members of the organization fear that the ribbon was meant as a threat due to its symbolic association with mourning. Also taken from the office were two mobile phones that had been provided by the government as a protection measure for the staff. The safe had also been opened and some money removed, although a considerable amount was left.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The work of organizations like Corporación Reiniciar, defending and promoting human rights, puts them at particular risk of attack and intimidation, especially in situations like the internal armed conflict in Colombia.

In 2002, due to constant threats and their situation of vulnerability, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States granted precautionary measures to Corporación Reiniciar. These urged the Colombian government to adopt security measures to protect Corporación Reiniciar members. On 10 October 2007 the former president of the UP gave evidence on the case of the UP at an IACHR hearing.

This break-in at the offices of Corporación Reiniciar is one of several break-ins at offices of non-governmental human rights organizations this year in Bogotá. (See UA 165/07, AMR 23/018/2007, 28 June 2007).

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

- expressing concern for the members of the NGO Corporación Reiniciar whose office was broken into at the beginning of November;
- urging the authorities to take effective action, as deemed appropriate by the staff of Corporación Reiniciar themselves, to protect them so they may continue their legitimate and important work in the defence of human rights without fear of intimidation;
- calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the break-in, to make the results public and to bring those responsible to justice;

- calling on the authorities to produce policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, to guarantee their safety according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility Of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and to make these plans public.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592

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

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Dr. Carlos Holguín Sardi

Ministro del Interior y Justicia

Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia, Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá D.C. Colombia

Fax: +57 1 560 46 30

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Sir

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4

Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Corporación Reiniciar

Calle 19 #3-10, Edificio Barichara Torre B,

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 25 December 2007