



AMERICAS





AMERICAS - WORLD-WIDE HARASSMENT AND REPRESSION





Argentina

▷ Mothers of the Place of May¹

In October 1999, the extremist group AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), issued death threats in a press release against the members of the **Mothers of the Place of May** association, in particular to its President **Mrs. Bonafini**, whom it described as a "guerillera commander". The group declared that it would take direct measures if members of this association continued to intervene in the trials, outside Argentina, of persons responsible for serious human rights violations. The AAA group, which sowed terror before the 1976 coup d'état, reappeared in Argentina in 1999.

▷ Death threats against lawyers

The Observatory has been informed of serious threats and acts of harassment against lawyers practising at Rosario (Santa Fe province) engaged in the fight to end impunity for persons guilty of serious violations during the military dictatorship. On 20 July 2000, **Mrs. Bruera** received a parcel in her office, inside of which was a hollowed-out book containing a 450 gram block of explosive, a battery, and cables. The parcel did not contain a detonator, but carried the message "Rest in Peace".

¹ The Observatory contacted the Argentine authorities directly on this case

During the inquiry, the police discovered the source of the anonymous phone threats of which Mrs. Bruera was a constant target. However, the telephone number turned out to belong to Mr. Daniel Luna, the chairman of the "deliberating" Council of the Human Rights Commission of Rosario, and a colleague of Mrs. Bruera. After denouncing the manoeuvre to the investigating judge, **Mr. Daniel Luna** received, on 17 November, a package with the sender's name written as Mrs. Bruera. Intrigued, Mr. Luna called the police. The package contained a detonator and an incendiary device which could have wounded him very seriously.

Mrs. Bruera also received a letter on 7 November containing the following sentence: "Bruera, we are going to kill you with a bullet to the head".

On 2 December, after denouncing the campaign of threats and harassment directed at her and her colleagues, Mrs. Bruera contacted the Under-Secretariat for Human Rights and demanded protection from the authorities.

In particular, she denounced: the abusive letters received by numerous lawyers and militants; the searches, in November and December 2000, of the offices of lawyers **Dr. Juan Roberto Coria**, **Dr. Lindolfo Bertinat**, **Vildor Garavelli**, **Dr. Juan Lewis** and **Mrs. María Eugenia Caggiano**, who heads the Argentine Workers' Centre (CTA) at Rosario; and finally, acts of intimidation against the militants of the Hijos association.



However, the authors of these deeds have not been identified, and so the protective measures had remained temporary.

▶ **Harassment and violence against the gay and lesbian community²**

The Observatory has received information from the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) regarding the harassment of **Mrs. Vanesa Piedrabuena**, the leading activist of Asociacion Travestis Unidas de Cordoba (ATUC). This harassment is allegedly in connection with her involvement in the case of **Vanesa Lorena Ledesma** (legal name "Miguel Angel" Ledesma), an activist and member of the ATUC who was tortured and killed while in detention.

On 13 July 2000, police officers searched the house of Vanesa Piedrabuena. The police had an official warrant, but it seemed to be without any justification. The officers focused their attention on the negatives of pictures showing Vanesa Ledesma's tortured body, which they studied for some time while making comments among themselves.

Vanesa Lorena Ledesma had been brutally arrested in Mikons Bar, Cordoba, on 11 February at 1:00 am. No further news could be obtained about her from the time of her arrest until five days later, on 16 February 2000, when official police reports described her death as attributed to a "cardiac arrest". An autopsy, performed on 16 February 2000, had shown strong evidence of physical punishment and torture. Pictures of her corpse, taken by friends, illustrated the severe physical abuse allegedly endured by Vanesa while in police custody.

² See urgent appeal ARG 001/0003/OBS 022 and ARG 002/0007/OBS 074



Bolivia

Death Threats¹

On 7 August 2000, around 5:30 p.m., **Mr. Sacha Llorentti Soliz**, Secretary of Legal Affairs to the National Executive Committee of the Bolivian Human Rights Permanent Assembly (APDHB, or "Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos de Bolivia"), received two calls on his mobile telephone containing insults and the explicit message, "Your days are numbered".

According to the APDHB, these threats are linked to recent criticism made by Mr. Llorentti Soliz, on behalf of the APDHB, concerning the state of emergency declared in April 2000, as a result of which numerous people have been killed or wounded, and many formal complaints of acts of torture have been made.

The APDHB has asked the Government Ministry (Ministerio de Gobierno) to intervene in order to ensure Mr. Llorentti Soliz' safety and freedom.

¹ See urgent appeal BOL 001/0008/OBS 083



Brazil

▷ Legal proceedings against José Rainha Jr.¹

In July 1997, **Mr. José Rainha Jr.** was sentenced to 26 years imprisonment for aiding and abetting the murder of both landowner José Machado and a police officer. These murders were committed at Pedro Canario, State of Espiritu Santo, during a battle which took place on 5 June 1989 between peasants and groups linked to Mr. José Machado.

This sentence was passed without taking into account serious evidence in favour of Mr. José Rainha Jr., in particular the eyewitness accounts of several people - including the Governor - who all declared that, on the day in question, the accused was at Ceará, a town situated about 2,000 kilometres from Pedro Canario. It should also be pointed out that four friends of the murdered landowner were members of the seven-man jury.

A second trial was fixed in accordance with Brazilian law, which stipulates that people sentenced to over 20 years imprisonment must be re-tried. The upshot of this second trial, which received wide media coverage and which was held from 3 to 5 April 2000 at Vitoria, State of Espiritu Santo, was the acquittal of Mr. Rainha Jr.

¹ Cf. appel urgent BRA 002/0003/OBS 023

▷ Harassment of the members of the Pastoral Land Commission

Death threats to Mr. Darci Frigo²

The Observatory was alerted by The Movement of Landless Rural Workers ("El Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra") that **Mr. Darci Frigo**, a lawyer and member of the Pastoral Land Commission (PLC) of Paraná, had received a death threat on 25 February 2000 during an anonymous telephone call.

He was warned he would "have his legs broken", and that someone would "finish the work" if he were to leave his home. This threat referred to a false accusation according to which he was alleged to have broken a policeman's leg during the violent dispersion of a demonstration by landless peasants at Curitiba, State of Paraná, asking for agrarian reforms. Mr. Frigo, who had gone to the site of the demonstration, had been severely beaten by the police.

After he had informed the Ministerio Publico of these threats, microphones were installed on his premises. From February to April 2000, he received no protection from the state authorities; only in April, for a period of two months, did he receive protection from the Federal Police. So far, nothing has been done to identify the authors of the threats.

² See urgent appeal BRA 001/0003/OBS 010



Threats/Legal proceedings against Henri Burin des Roziers³

The Observatory has been informed of serious threats made against priest and lawyer **Henri Burin des Roziers**, defender of the rights of landless peasants in the southern region of the State of Pará, and member of the Pastoral Land Commission (PLC) of the South of Pará.

At the beginning of the year 2000, a list of persons "destined to die" was disseminated on an unspecified date, and included the names of Henri Burin des Roziers and **Mr. Sebastian Ataiides**, Chairman of the Rural Workers' Trade Union of Xinguara, Pará.

The Observatory has also been informed of the presence of a well-known hired assassin (whose identity has not been revealed) at Xinguara, and of a rumour that "a price had already been put on the main heads".

These threats worsened in April 2000, while Father Henri Burin des Roziers was preparing the file for the trial of a major landowner, Jerônimo Alves de Amorim, who was sentenced in June for the murder of trade unionist Expedito Ribeiro de Souza.

Subsequently, in July 2000, Henri Burin des Roziers was the object of a vast smear campaign after he had published, under the auspices of the PLC, a file on the practices of torture committed by the civil police in the Police Commissariat of the South of the State of Pará. This report, which gave full documentation of 17 cases, had considerable impact at both national and international levels, and produced a very violent reaction on the part of the police and local authorities. Henri Burin des Roziers was

investigated by the police both for a homicide case and for libel. He was prosecuted by the government of Pará for libel, and by the former delegate-general of the police of Pará for material and moral damages.

Harassment against Father Burin des Roziers escalated further in December 2000, when the judge of Xinguara, Dr. Raimundo Moiséés Alves Flexa, put him on trial, together with another PLC lawyer **Anilson Russi**, for taking part in a protest demonstration following the municipal elections in Xinguara, Pará.

Although neither violence nor material damage occurred during this demonstration, these two lawyers have been accused of incitement to violence, the formation of gangs, insults against the authorities, and sequestration. The name of lawyer Anilson Russi appears in none of the declarations by the witnesses heard by the police, and the participation of Father Burin des Roziers, accused of being one of the organisers of the demonstration, went no further than his mere presence at the end of the event.

Over the last ten years, Father Henri Burin des Roziers, along with other members of the Roman Catholic Church in the region, has done considerable work for the poorest classes of society. He is committed to agrarian reform in the region, and has denounced the practice of forced labour (slavery), violence, and arbitrary behaviour on the part of the civil police. Also, he has tried to combat the impunity enjoyed by the authorities by supporting their victims during the trials of those responsible for murders and attacks against trade union and community leaders in the region.

³ See urgent appeal BRA 003/0005/OBS 042



▶ Death Threats⁴

On 5 September 2000, **Mr. Eduardo Bernardes da Silva**, a member of the Never Again Torture Group of São Paulo ("Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais do São Paulo") and of Amnesty International (São Paulo and Porto Alegre branches), received a parcel bearing a swastika, accompanied by a letter signed by a group of skinheads.

The same day, two members of the São Paulo Human Rights Commission, **Mr. Renato Simoes** and **Mr. Italo Cardoso**, received a letter from this group that threatened to exterminate "gays", Jews, black people, "nordestinos", and all those who defend these communities. This letter also threatened to attack several organisations, including Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais (GTNM), Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT, or "Action Chrétienne pour l'Abolition de la Torture"), Amnesty International, and gay and lesbian groups.

On 6 September, the Gay Pride Parade association (GLBT or "Parada do Orgulho Gay"), which

works for the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals of São Paulo, also received a parcel sent by a group calling itself the Jewish Congregation of São Paulo ("Congregação israelita Paulista").

Information received shows that the activities of neo-fascist groups are a relatively new phenomenon, apparent mainly since 16 February 2000, when 18 men belonging to a group called "Carecas do ABC" beat a homosexual, Mr. Edson Neris da Silva, to death. These criminals have been arrested and judged by a penal court. Following the sentence, the members of this group used two bombs to blow up a train from São Paulo.

Following this, the São Paulo police created a special squadron to investigate neo-fascist activities, although so far to no avail.

In November 1999, a group called the Anti-Chaos Front (FAC, or "Frente Anti-Caus") placed a bomb in the offices of Amnesty International at São Paulo. In the same period, a threatening letter was also sent to this organisation on account of its activities in defence of gays and black people.

⁴ See urgent appeal BRA 004/0009/OBS 099



Chile

▶ Theft and Threats¹

During the night of 3 November 1999, the central offices of the People's Rights Defence Committee (CODEPU, "**Comite de Defensa de los Derechos del Pueblo**") was attacked by unknown persons who entered the offices, went through the documentation, and took away printers, televisions, cameras, faxes, etc. Paradoxically, this "theft" took place at a time when CODEPU President **Fabiola Letelier** and

lawyers **Julia Urquieta** and **Hugo Gutiérrez** were under police protection as a result of threats received, and when the association's offices - in particular the one in Santiago - were checked regularly by police on their rounds. These are part of the series of threats which have been made, since the beginning of the Pinochet affair in October 1998, against several persons working for the CODEPU.

¹ See urgent appeal CHL 001/9911/OBS 071



Colombie

Summary Executions and Attacks



Murders of Trade Unionists

Murder of Jesús Orlando Crespo Cárdenas¹

The trade union leader **Jesús Orlando Crespo Cárdenas**, Chairman of the Trade Union of the Workers of the Municipality of Bugalagrande (SINTRAMUNICIPIO), Valle de Cauca, was murdered on 31 January 2000. According to information received, he was killed by men claiming to be paramilitary members of the "Bloque Calima" group.

Murder of Mrs. Carmen Emilia Rivas²

The Observatory was informed by several organisations, including the United Headquarters of the Workers' Unions of Colombia (CUT, or "Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia"), of the murder of **Mrs. Carmen Emilia Rivas**, Chairwoman of the National Association of Hospital and Clinical Employees, Cartago branch, Valle de Cauca, on 17 May 2000.

This murder was committed by unidentified persons in the emergency room of the Sagrado Corazón de Jesús Hospital, at Cartago, where Carmen Emilia Rivas worked.

¹ See urgent appeal COL 001/0003/OBS 012

² See urgent appeal COL 005/0005/OBS 043

Murder of Edgar Marino Pereira Galvis³

On 25 June 2000, in the county of Meta, **Mr. Edgar Marino Pereira Galvis**, member of the sub-managerial committee of the trade union ANTHOC, was murdered in his home by unidentified persons. Information received stresses that, generally speaking, all trade union leaders and defenders of human rights in this county are in danger, and of this the county and national authorities are perfectly aware.

Murder of Roberto Cañarte Montealegre⁴

Mr. Roberto Cañarte Montealegre, Chairman of the Trade Union of the Workers of the Township of Bugalagrande (SINTRAMUNICIPIO), was found killed on the site of Galicia, near Bugalagrande, Valle de Cauca, about four months after his disappearance. He disappeared on 29 June 2000 at Paile Arriba, Valle de Cauca.

The CUT and the Committee of Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP) claimed that members of the paramilitary group Colombian United Self-Defence (AUC, or "Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia") were probably responsible.

³ See urgent appeal COL 007/0007/OBS 072

⁴ See urgent appeal COL 007/0007/OBS 072



Murder of Carmen Emilio Sánchez Coronel⁵

Mr. Carmen Emilio Sánchez Coronel, official delegate of the Teacher's Union of the Norte de Santander (ASINORT), was murdered on 5 August 2000.

According to information gathered by the CUT, on 5 August 2000, paramilitary groups murdered seven people in the town of Sardinata, Norte de Santander, including Mr. Carmen Emilio Sánchez Coronel, who was travelling from Cúcuta to Ocaña. The paramilitary assassins had set up a barrier, and had lists of the names of the victims.

The Attack against two members of SINTRAEMCALI⁶

On 19 September 2000, two unknown armed strangers fired several shots at **Mr. Ricardo Herrera**, Secretary-General of the trade union SINTRAEMCALI, and **Mr. Omar de Jesús Noguera**, a trade union employee, on their arrival at Mr. Herrera's home in the Junín neighborhood, at Cali, Valle de Cauca.

Mr. Omar de Jesús Noguera, who was wounded during the attack, died from his wounds on 23 September 2000. Mr. Jesús Noguera, 32 years-old, was an employee of the Management of Aqueducts and Sewers of EMCALI, E.I.C.E. He had spoken out against corruption, and participated as a trade union member in mobilisation activities against the privatisation of EMCALI.

The Chairman of SINTRAEMCALI, **Mr. Alexander López Amaya**, was forced to leave the country in September following repeated death threats against him, and after being chased by hired assassins.

⁵ See urgent appeal COL 009/0008/OBS 085

⁶ See urgent appeal COL 012/0009/OBS 102

Murder of Mrs. Gabriela Galeano⁷

The Observatory was informed that **Mrs. Gabriela Galeano**, Secretary of the Women's and Children's Section of the CUT, Norte de Santander branch, was murdered on 10 December 2000 in her home (Villa del Rosario), in front of her children.

Murder Attempt against Wilson Borja⁸

On 15 December 2000, at about 6:10 a.m., **Mr. Wilson Borja**, Chairman of the National Federation of Civil Servants (FENALTRASE) and member of the Central Committee of the Colombian Communist Party, was victim of an attack with machine-guns and R-15 rifles while driving a van at the intersection of road 80 and highway 102 in the quarter of Bochica. He was hit by at least 3 bullets, and was hospitalised with urgency for immediate operation. Mrs. Maria del Pilar Balonos Pinzon, a 30 year-old coffee vendor at the site of the attack, was killed. Two bodyguards of Mr. Borja Enrique's were wounded.

Mr. Wilson Borja, apart from being a trade union leader, is also a member of the Civil Society Negotiation Commission (Comisión Facilitadora de la Sociedad Civil), whose aim is to help create a free area in the counties of Bolívar and Antioquia in order to begin peace talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN).

Mr. Wilson Borja had registered a legal complaint with the Prosecutor of the Region of Bogotá in order to denounce the repeated death threats that he had received by telephone, letter, and even condolence cards sent to his family.

⁷ See urgent appeal COL 019/0012/OBS 130

⁸ See urgent appeal COL 019/0012/OBS 130



▷ **Murder of a Peace Community member⁹**

On 19 February 2000, between 7:35 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., armed men in military uniform entered the urban area of San José de Apartadó and murdered five people, including a member of the town's **Peace Community**. A few weeks earlier, on 2 January, a television documentary stated that "a military secret services report" had mentioned that the FARC were appealing to the Peace Communities.

The Peace Community is a group of 1,023 victims of forced displacement who have decided, since March 1997, to abstain from any form of direct or indirect participation in the armed conflict. Despite this, around 65 of them have since been murdered by members of paramilitary groups of the army and of the FARC.

▷ **Murder of Jesús Ramiro Zapata Hoyos¹⁰**

On 3 May 2000, **Mr. Jesús Ramiro Zapata Hoyos**, human rights defender in the Antioquian Northeast and Coordinator of the Human Rights Committee of Segovia, and President of the Seeds of Liberty ("Semillas de Libertad") association, was murdered in Segovia (Antioquia).

Mr. Jesús Ramiro Zapata Hoyos was seized by various armed men on 3 May at approximately 8.30 p.m. in the municipality of Segovia. Several hours later, his family members received a phone call requesting that they collect his corpse from a place in the country on the outskirts of Segovia. Some two weeks previous

to this, members of a paramilitary group that had recently arrived in the municipality of Segovia had looked for him fervently.

Since 1996, Mr. Zapata Hoyos had been the target of numerous persecutions, threats, and accusations by the military authorities as a result of his activities. In particular, military intelligence reports accused him, among other things, of "carrying out human rights activities", and of belonging to the ELN. This situation of overt persecution forced him to leave the municipality of Segovia, and to settle in the city of Medellín.

In July 1996, Mr. Zapata Hoyos was temporarily and arbitrarily detained; in 1997 he was the object of various penal investigations and constant harassment by regional prosecutors for alleged crimes of rebellion.

This situation led the Interamerican Human Rights Commission, on 11 February 1998, to request the Colombian government to grant protection to Mr. Zapata Hoyos.

▷ **Murder of Mrs. Elizabeth Cañas Cano¹¹**

The Association of the Relatives of Disappeared Prisoners (ASFADDES, or "Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos") announced the murder, on 11 July 2000 at Barrancabermeja, of **Mrs. Elizabeth Cañas Cano**, member of the ASFADDES. She has been actively involved in combating unpunished criminals, especially on the disappearance of a group of 25 people, including her son Giovanni Cañas Cano and brother José Milton Cañas Cano;

⁹ See urgent appeal COL 001/0003/OBS 012

¹⁰ See urgent appeal COL 003/0005/OBS 037

¹¹ See urgent appeal COL 018/0011/OBS 120



both had disappeared at Barrancabermeja on 16 May 1998. The information received specifies that Mrs. Cañas Cano had testified as a witness before the International Opinion Court during their 1999 sessions held in Toronto and Montreal, Canada, and in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. Further-more, the murder of Mrs. Cañas Cano by two unidentified men took place the day after the President approved the law concerning abductions.



Murder of Alfredo Castro Jaidar¹²

On 5 October 2000, around 10:00 p.m., **Mr. Alfredo Castro Jaidar**, a political science professor, former Vice-Rector, and candidate for the rectorate of Atlántico University at Barranquilla, was murdered by four armed men. In 1997, several members of the University community affiliated with the Trade Union Association of University Professors (ASPU) created a movement against corruption in the university. Since then, students and professors have suffered

harassment, persecution, legal proceedings, and fatal attacks, including the following:

Mr. Diodedit Navarro Jaramillo, a militant student, murdered on 10 August 1997; **Mr. Raúl Peña**, Professor and Secretary of the University Professors' Trade Union, murdered on 30 December 1998; **Mr. Alexander Acuña**, a student, disappeared on 3 December 1999, his corpse discovered three days later; **Mr. José Luis Martínez Castro**, a student, died on 4 February 2000 under strange circumstances in a university hall; **Mr. Adolfo Altamar Lara**, a student, seriously wounded and died a few days later; **Mr. Luis Mesa Almanza**, lawyer and graduate of Atlántico University, murdered on 26 August 2000 while leaving a meeting during which he had discussed, with students and professors, the latest demonstration organised by the students of Atlántico University; and **Mr. Reinaldo Serna López** and **Mr. Humberto Contreras**, imprisoned without judge's order on 9 February 2000, accused of committing terrorist acts on the basis of completely falsified evidence.

Enforced disappearances



Abduction of Edgar Quiroga¹³

The Observatory has been informed of the abduction of peasant leader **Edgar Quiroga** on 28 November 1999, on the La Placita trail in Cerro

Azul, in the municipality of San Pablo, Bolívar. Edgar Quiroga is a member of the Standing Working Organisation for Peace and Development in Magdalena Medio ("Mesa de Trabajo Permanente por la Paz y el Desarrollo del Magdalena Medio"), and one of the signatories of the agreement for the temporary return of thousands of persons forcibly displaced from the South of Bolívar and Magdalena Medio, signed on 4 October 1998 at Barrancabermeja along with

¹² See urgent appeal COL 015/0010/OBS 107

¹³ See urgent appeal COL 014/9912/OBS 076



the President of the Republic and other authorities.

At the same time as Quiroga, the young Giraldo Fuentes (witness to the trials open by the Ministerio Público for acts of torture against the population of Cerro Azul Region, municipality of San Pablo, Bolívar) was also kidnapped and has disappeared.

An open letter to the President of the Republic by several organisations, states that both individuals were detained by members of the 5th Brigade of the National Army, and that they were then handed over to paramilitary groups, active in Simití and San Pablo municipalities, Bolívar (no other precisions were given concerning Giraldo Fuentes). Quiroga was abducted when he was heading to the place where 3,000 people, victims of forced displacement following recent paramilitary actions in Southern Bolívar, were left to themselves without any protection.

▷ Enforced disappearance of Mr. Bedoya Hoyos¹⁴

The Observatory was informed by the Indigenous Organisation of Antioquia ("Organización Indígena de Antioquia") of the probable abduction of **Mr. Jairo Bedoya Hoyos**, on 2 March 2000, when he left his son at the Urbanización Señorial de Envigado, Antioquia. Since then, no news of him has reached neither his family nor his colleagues.

Mr. Bedoya Hoyos is a metalworking engineer and lecturer in social development at the University of Antioquia. Since 1995, he has been an advisor to the Organización Indígena de Antioquia

¹⁴ See urgent appeal COL 001/0003/OBS 012

(OIA); since mid-1999, he has chaired the Campaign So That Embera May Live ("Campaña para que Embera Viva"), an OIA programme to defend the indigenous Embera communities. Furthermore, as an elected representative, Mr. Bedoya Hoyos has held various public positions; he has conducted the undertaking Solidarity and Health of Apartadó, and has been an advisor to the Indigenous Social Alliance (ASI).

▷ Kidnapping of Prof. Eivar Meléndez¹⁵

The Observatory was informed that **Prof. Eivar Meléndez**, President of the trade union of teachers in Nariño, was kidnapped on 9 March 2000 in the township Roberto Payán, county of Nariño. Since 15 March, no news has been received as to the site where he is being detained. The identity of his kidnappers remains unknown.

▷ Enforced disappearance of Gilberto Agudelo Martínez¹⁶

The Observatory was informed of the enforced disappearance, on 7 April 2000, of **Mr. Gilberto Agudelo Martínez**, age 48. Mr. Martínez has been working since 1986 at the National University of Colombia, Medellín, where he has also held the post of President of the trade union SINTRAUNICOL. His disappearance occurred presumably when he was travelling from Bogotá to Bucaramanga. On 7 June 2000, Radio Caracol

¹⁵ See urgent appeal COL 002/0003/OBS 016

¹⁶ See urgent appeal COL 006/0006/OBS 055



reported that Mr. Agudelo Martínez had been kidnapped by the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). The SINTRAUNICOL reported that Mr. Gilberto Agudelo Martínez had been the victim of repeated threats, both direct and indirect by the AUC. The situation had intensified since February 2000.



Enforced disappearance of members of ASFADDES¹⁷

Brothers **Rubén** and **Wilson Usuga Higuita**, 40 and 25 years-old respectively, and **Arvey Poso Usuga**, 17 years-old (all members of ASFADDES) are declared to have disappeared on 25 August 2000.

Rubén and Wilson Usuga Higuita and Arvey Poso Usuga are members of the Usuga Higuita family, displaced from Uraba, which has been taking an active role, since September 1999, in the work of the Medellín branch of ASFADDES.

On 25 August 2000 at 1:00 p.m., Mr. Wilson Usuga Higuita and his nephew Arvey Poso Usuga left their home in order to go to the centre of Medellín to meet his brother Rubén Usuga Higuita.

The information received states that, on 22 July 1999, the home of Rubén Usuga Higuita at Medellín was searched on the pretext that stolen goods were allegedly hidden there. The persons who conducted this search stated they came from the Ministerio Público, and took photographs of Rubén, his bank account number, and his cellular phone code. Although the situation has been denounced, no government institution has declared responsibility for this search.

Furthermore, on 18 August 1999, these persons, who have now disappeared, had denounced to the Ministerio Público the disappearance of other members of their family at Uraba (**Rosalba Usuga Higuita** and **Joaquín Emilio Guisao** on 28 January 1997, and **Luis Fernando Usuga Higuita** on 22 January 1998, in the town of Santa Martha).

Furthermore, the Observatory was informed of the disappearance of **Mrs. Claudia Patricia Monsalve Pulgarín**, 31 years-old, and of **Mr. Ángel Quintero Mesa**, 44 years-old, both members of ASFADDES¹⁸.

On 6 October 2000, around 5:00 p.m., these two people left the ASFADDES office with five other members of the Association. After dinner, at 10:30 p.m., Mr. Quintero Mesa, employee of the section of ASFADDES in Medellín and Rubén and Wilson Higuita's brother-in-law, accompanied Mrs. Monsalve Pulgarín from the station to the township of Itagüí where she lives. Since that day, no news of them has been received, despite research conducted by their families and the members of ASFADDES at hospitals, lecture halls, police stations, and the homes of friends and relatives.

The Hector Abad Gómez Permanent Commission for the Defence of Human Rights ("Comite Permanente para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos 'Héctor Abad Gómez'") states that Mr. Quintero Mesa and Mrs. Monsalve Pulgarín were kidnapped by armed men who led them to a grey Chevrolet Swift car, accompanied by two other people aboard a black motorcycle.

¹⁷ See urgent appeal COL 010/0008/OBS 089

¹⁸ See urgent appeal COL 014/0010/OBS 105



Threats

▶ Threats to the members of the Corporación Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo"¹⁹

The Observatory has been informed of new death threats uttered against **Mr. Alirio Uribe Muñoz**, a lawyer and human rights defender, member of the "José Alvear Restrepo" Lawyers' Association (CCAJAR, or "Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'"), and Vice-President of the FIDH.

On 5 May 2000, a pamphlet was published which warned of a coming paramilitary offensive in the capital, Bogotá, in which the name of lawyer Uribe Muñoz was mentioned among the names of persons to be executed.

Previously, Mr. Uribe Muñoz had been the target of grave harassment and threats. This situation became aggravated towards the end of 1999 as he suffered repeated visits and telephone calls to his place of residence, office, or the residence of his family in Bucaramanga, by unknown persons asking for information about him. On one such occasion, his family was told that he was being sought in order to "give him a present"; fictitious telephone numbers and addresses were left. On several occasions, unknown individuals followed him on motorbikes without number plates. Moreover, various threatening pamphlets appeared in the classes where he taught, mentioning various professors and the Lawyers' Association. In August 1999, the name of Alirio

Uribe Muñoz appeared on a list of persons threatened with death, issued by the group "Ejército Rebelde Colombiano"²⁰. In addition, towards the end of 1999, a document appeared in the offices of the CUT which threatened various persons, including Uribe Muñoz.

Moreover, the Observatory was informed of new harassment against **Mr. Oscar Rodas Villegas**²¹, a lawyer and member of CCAJAR, threatened with death in 1999; he subsequently put an end to his academic activities at the University of Antioquia.

On 24 January 2001, three men and a woman kidnapped his companion in Medellín, around 2:30 p.m.; they blindfolded her, took her to an unknown house and beat her. They liberated her at the end of the day, asking her to tell Mr. Rodas Villegas that he had to disappear before 17 February or they would set about his family, in particular his daughter. They also asked whether he had understood the message dated four months back, referring to the killing of his brother **Juan Fernando Rodas Villegas** on 23 September 2000 by unknown individuals.

The members of the Colectivo de Abogados live in a state of permanent insecurity, as do all defenders of human rights in Colombia.

In order to protest this situation, and remind the authorities of their own responsibilities, the members of the Colectivo de Abogados have decided to return to the Ministry of the Interior the protective material they had received from the Committee for Risk Assessment, comprised

¹⁹ See urgent appeals COL 004/0005/OBS 040 and COL 001/0101/OBS 009

²⁰ See annual report 1999

²¹ See urgent appeal COL 001/0101/OBS 009



of steel security doors, *avante*/radios, and bullet-proof vests²².

This symbolic decision was intended by the members of the Collective to show that the measures of protection provided by this programme were insufficient in view of the dangers they incur. In addition, they are no solution for this state of insecurity, and they have been more of a pretext for the authorities to avoid coming to grips with the deep-rooted causes of the problems.



Threats to trade unionists

Threats to a member of the SINTRAUNICOL²³

The CUT has informed the Observatory of serious dangers threatening the life and safety of **Mr. Rafael Marrugo**, President of the Colombian University Workers' and Employees' Trade Union (SINTRAUNICOL). He is the victim of pressure from armed persons, who are said to have exerted pressure near his home, despite it being situated near an Immediate Attention Command (CAI, or "Comando de Atención Inmediata") of the National Police.

Threats to Gerardo González²⁴

According to reports from CCAJAR, a pamphlet published on 5 May 2000 reported that a paramilitary offensive would soon take place in Bogotá, and announced the imminent execution of various persons, including **Mr. Gerardo González**, Secretary for Agrarian and Indigenous

Affairs of the CUT, President of the Small Agriculturists' Trade Union of Cundinamarca (SINPEAGRICUN), and member of the ILO Governing Body. Two days later, on 7 May at the Bogotá airport of El Dorado, while waiting to board a plane for Europe he was watched and followed by an unknown man. Once inside the plane, he was called on by loudspeaker; when he responded to the call there were two men waiting for him who looked at him in an intimidating way without uttering a word.

Previously, in August 1999, a group calling itself the "Colombian Rebel Army", published a list of 21 persons whom it threatened with death, which included Mr. Gerardo González. His name also appeared in a document sent to the office of the CUT at the end of 1999, which announced a plan to exterminate trade union leaders, other civic and popular leaders, and human rights defenders. As far back as 1978, because of such threats, Mr. González had to abandon the region in which he lived; for the same reason, in 1988, the CUT sent him to Europe for a period of time. In 1993, he denounced the threats by the Prosecutor General of the Nation.

The harassment and threats were also extended to Mr. González' family. His daughter, **Aurora González**, has been threatened and followed by members of the military intelligence, as confirmed by the Administrative Security Department (DAS). The previous government granted him certain security measures.

The same reports recall that, during the present year (no date or month are indicated), Mr. Gerardo González, his daughter Aurora González, and his wife were called upon to testify before the Prosecutor General of the Nation. During the interrogation, the investigation centred around the family, according to military intelli-

22 See press release of the Observatory dated 14/09/2000

23 See urgent appeal COL 007/0007/OBS 072

24 See urgent appeal COL 008/0008/OBS 079



gence reports, they were arbitrarily labelled as presumed members of the FARC.

According to the CCAJAR, constant harassment and threats directed at Mr. Gerardo González and his family are due to his activities, which resulted in the creation of various organizations, including the CUT, the National Farmers' Association (ANUC), and the National Federation of Farmers' Unions (FENSUAGRO).

Threats to the trade unionists of the Valle de Cauca²⁵

According to the information received by the Foundation of the Committee of Solidarity Towards Political Prisoners (CSPP), on 2 November 2000, a press release from the Colombian United Self-Defence (AUC) was sent to the offices of the CUT branch of the county of the Valle de Cauca in which the AUC targeted the defenders of human rights and trade union rights as "military objectives", especially in the Valle de Cauca:

"Our country, Colombia, now deserves political, social and economic stability, which can be obtained by eradicating and exterminating all [...] trade unionists and defenders of human rights, since their sole activity is to promote and support guerrilla warfare. According to our information services, they are in relations with the E.L.N. urban militias. The facts: meetings with the E.L.N. militiamen. Action to be performed: to designate them as military objectives, force them into exile, exterminate all these "bastards" and their offspring. Date of inception of military action: from 30 November for all who have not already left, following the orders of our chiefs.

²⁵ See urgent appeal COL 016/0011/OBS 113

For a beautiful, clean and peaceful Colombia. AUC".

In this same press release, the AUC threatens several town councillors of Yumbo because, "they support various subversive groups in order to obtain their protection". Identical threats were made to other leaders of the CUT branch in the Valle de Cauca, and also to **Mr. Pedro Varon**, legal expert to the Management of the CUT branch in the county of Tolima.

Threats to a member of the País Libre Organisation²⁶

The Observatory has received various reports of serious threats made to **Mr. Francisco Santos Calderón**, who had to leave his country. The "País Libre" organisation, chaired by Mr. Santos Calderón, has been working for several years to develop campaigns against the practice of kidnapping in Colombia. Information received indicates that these death threats appear to come from the FARC.



Threats to members of ASFADDES

Threats to members from Cauca, Medellín, Bucaramanga and Cundinamarca²⁷

On 3 May, the daughter of **Mrs. Astrid E. Manrique Carvajal**, member of the Managing Council of ASFADDES and of its Cauca branch, was followed by a man who stated he was from the police; he pretended to know her mother, where

²⁶ See urgent appeal COL 002/0003/OBS 016

²⁷ See urgent appeal COL 006/0006/OBS 055 et COL 018/0011/OBS 120



she worked, and other personal and professional information. He threatened to kill her if she were to tell her mother of this meeting.

On 30 May 2000, at a meeting of the Commemoration of the International Week of Disappeared Prisoners at Popayán, Cauca, two men arrived at the site of the meeting on a motorcycle with the intention of making a film by pretending to be students. They left because of the identity check at the entrance; later, the police discovered that the motorcycle belonged to a police officer.

Furthermore, on 8 and 9 October, four families of the ASFADDES branch at Medellín received several threatening telephone calls, which were repeated on 31 October, following which they had to leave the region.

Another member of the same branch received a telephone call on 23 October, asking for his address in order to send him a parcel from the National Institute for Sport and Leisure (INDER), an organisation with which he had no connection. The same person received another call on 13 November saying: "To die, to die, you're going to die".

On 11 November, a letter carrying a death threat was sent to **Mr. Sancho Castro**, who works with the ASFADDES. On 23 November 2000, another message containing a death symbol was addressed to Mr. Castro, stating: "Hypocritical anti-fascists will be eliminated". In November, a telephone call was also received of a woman crying and trying to call for help as if she were being tortured, and then the voice of a man ordering her to hang up.

The Bucaramanga branch of ASFADDES also received several strange telephone calls in one case, someone asked to speak to a member of this branch, and when the member replied, the

person hung up. On other occasions, the person asked for Mr. Wilson Vega, unknown to the organisation, pretending he had filed a lawsuit with the procurator, and that he was a member of the organisation.

On 20 November, the person in charge of the Cundinamarca branch of ASFADDES is reported to have been followed in Bogotá by two unknown people who, when she noticed them, showed her the mobile telephone that had been stolen from her the day before.

Threats to the Members of ASFADDES in the Region of Barrancabermeja²⁸

The number of threats and acts of harassment has intensified against members of ASFADDES in the region of Barrancabermeja.

On 29 and 30 September 2000, during a Forum entitled "For Life and Human Rights" held at Barrancabermeja, threats were made by paramilitary groups in the form of slogans written in the toilets of the hall in which the forum was held. The following text was found: "In order to contribute to the sort of country we want, we hold a washing-list and we shall give statistics of these 'bastard' guerrilleros, whom we shall kill unless they stop their activities: CREDHOS, twenty-odd members, ASFADDES, 3, and you know who these 'bastards' are".

The Observatory recalls that, in May 2000, **Mrs. Rocio Campos**, member of the Managing Council of ASFADDES and its Barrancabermeja branch received several telephone calls from unknown persons who threatened her, fired gunshots, and asked her about her brother

²⁸ See urgent appeal COL 011/0009/OBS 094 et COL 013/0010/OBS 104



Daniel Campos, who disappeared in May 1998. During 1999, she was the victim of similar harassment, and was followed by unknown persons.

Mrs. Rocio Campos learnt that her name was on a list of threatened persons. Those who felt as such had repeatedly, and without success, asked the authorities to supply a communications system for the Barrancabermeja branch, which would have served as a means for alerting other organisations in the face of insecurity in the region.

Several other associations active at Barrancabermeja are the target of repeated acts of harassment, especially the Popular Women's Organization (OFP, or "Organización Feminina Popular"), the Peasants' Association of the Valley of River Cimitarra ("Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra"), Regional Committee of Permanent Work for Peace in Magdalena Medio ("la Mesa Regional de Trabajo Permanente por la Paz del Magdalena Medio"), several professors and students of the University of La Paz, and the Regional Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS).

For example, on 26 August 2000, around 4:00 p.m., an unknown person called the mobile telephone of one of the members of CREDHOS and said: "Guerrillera, hijo de puta ("you bastard"), we are giving 24 hours to you and the guerrilleros working with you to leave Barrancabermeja if you don't want to end up like the old woman at the social security and her friends". In June and July 2000, five social security employees had been murdered.



Threats to Members of the OFP²⁹

The Observatory has been informed of threats and acts of harassment to members of the **Organización Feminina Popular** (OFP) from paramilitary groups.

On 20 January 2001, during an operation in the West of Barrancabermeja, paramilitary men burst into the offices of the Women's House run by the OFP, situated in the southwestern sector of the town. The men asked the people present to give them the keys of the house, but were refused. Since then, the OFP members have been threatened by these groups in retaliation as recently in February and March 2001.

Furthermore, during the second half of 2000, the OFP members at Yondó had to put up with the permanent presence of paramilitary forces inside and outside their offices. They were also accused of belonging to guerrilla groups.

Threats were also made to OFP members at Cantagallo and at Puerto Wilches, where the OFP members were threatened by paramilitary forces after refusing to give them food on credit.

Even though protection measures were requested of the Interamerican Human Rights Commission in May 2000, these events continue. The measures are presently under examination.

In order to ask the township of Barrancabermeja to resist the paramilitary project in the region, the OFP, together with the Centre for Human Rights Workers in Barrancabermeja and Magdalena Medio ("Espacio de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras de Derechos Humanos de Barrancabermeja et de Magdalena Medio"),

²⁹ The Observatory contacted the authorities directly on this case



decided to start a mobilisation campaign entitled "Long Live Barranca: for Life, for Peace and Against the Paramilitary", from 8 February to 8 March 2001, with the support of other national human rights organisations such as the Lawyers' Collective ("Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo'").

The Observatory sent a solidarity mission to express its support for the civilian society of Barrancabermeja on 8 March 2001 - the climax of this campaign and an event to which several representatives of the international community are invited.



Serious threats to members of the IPC³⁰

On the morning of 9 October 2000, three telephone calls were received at the office of the Colombian Popular Training Institute (IPC, or "Instituto Popular de Capacitación de Colombia") from people stating they belonged to the United Colombian United Self-Defence (AUC, or "Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia"). These callers stated that the following persons were "military objectives": **Nelson Restrepo**,

Ignacio Arango, **Juan Carlos Muñoz**, and **Fredy Vélez** because of their participation in the IPC's human rights programme; and **Mr. Wilfer Bonilla**, who had been working for a month for the IPC youth programme.

The same day, at 4 p.m., members of the Technical Investigation Body (CTI, "Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación") and of the Metropolitan Police came to the IPC premises in plain clothes without a search warrant or even the presence of representatives of the Ministerio Público. The IPC members refused them entry. Later, the officers informed them it "was an immediate intervention in response to a call informing them a kidnapping was taking place in the IPC Management by five hooded persons". After explaining the situation, the CTI officers and the police were assured that the information they had received was quite false.

It is important to recall that, in 1999, the IPC suffered two attacks. On 28 January, four members of the organisation were kidnapped by the paramilitary, and on 29 August an explosive device was planted at the headquarters of the organisation (see Annual Report 1999).

Arbitrary arrests and imprisonment



Arbitrary Imprisonment of ANDAS members³¹

Mr. Eder Jaidier Orcasita Amaya was arrested on 19 January 2000 in the afternoon as he was

leaving the offices of ANDAS in Bucaramanga; also arrested was **Mr. Wilson Vega Castro**, Secretary of the organisation. Both were detained by secret agents of the national army belonging to the GAULA group who failed to show any detention order, and brought them to the headquarters of the 5th Army Brigade. Mr. Vega Castro was released a few minutes later.

³⁰ See urgent appeal COL 015/0010/OBS 107

³¹ See urgent appeal COL 002/0003/OBS 016



In the past few days, General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval, the Commandant of the 5th Army Brigade with headquarters in Bucaramanga, declared publicly through the Regional paper *Vanguardia Liberal* that, he "came from 17th Brigade with headquarters in Urabá where he had faced many NGOs, and delivered a blow to each of them, and similarly he would put the ones of Bucaramanga in their place".

▷ Arrest of Mrs. Alicia Romero Escobar³²

On 20 October 2000, at around 11:30 a.m., **Mrs. Alicia Romero Escobar**, lawyer and member of the local Human Rights Coordination at Barranquilla, was arrested by agents of the Elite Corps of the National Police, commanded by lieutenant Villalba, at Soledad, in the county of Atlántico. The agents forced her to get into a police vehicle while telling her she was not under arrest. During the trip to the main police station of Soledad, the agents harassed her, telling her that, "all NGO members are guerrilleros". Once they arrived at the Soledad police station, lieutenant Villalba made a radio call to the Mayor, Mr. Crisanto Alvarez and told him: "Mr. Mayor, it's done, we've arrested the lawyer who is denouncing you".

She was imprisoned for about 36 hours and then released.

On 6 October 2000, during the First County-Wide Human Rights Forum, Mrs. Romero Escobar had publicly accused the Mayor Crisanto Alvarez and several police officers of ill-treating and forcibly attacking displaced persons. She had further

denounced the fact that the administration of the township of Soledad had arbitrarily given in to Mr. Eliecer Cerenne, representing a multinational company, despite the presence of numerous displaced persons at Soledad, and the existence of numerous low-income families with nowhere to live.

▷ Arbitrary Imprisonment of Luis Gabriel Caldas León³³

The Observatory was informed of the imprisonment of **Mr. Luis Gabriel Caldas León**, on 14 November 2000, by agents of the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) in the town of Ipiales, county of Narino, on the Ecuadorian border.

Mr. Caldas León, a conscientious objector, is the Co-ordinator of the Conscientious Objectors' Collective of Medellín, Executive Director of the Corporation of the Non-Violent Action Group for Integral Human Development (G.A.N.D.H.I.), and continental spokesman for the Latin American and Caribbean Conscientious Objectors' Network. According to the Conscientious Objectors' Collective of Medellín and the Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War (REDEPAZ), Mr. Caldas León was arrested en route from Quito in Ecuador to be present at trials of conscientious objectors, and then to Chile, where he intended to take part in the forthcoming National Meeting of Chilean Conscientious Objectors.

He was detained during 3 days in Ipiales. Then it appeared that his arrest was the result of an administrative mistake, the arrest warrant being null and void since it was dated 1995. At that time,

³² See urgent appeal COL 016/0011/OBS 113

³³ See urgent appeal COL 017/0011/OBS 116



Mr. Caldas León had already been arrested and had already served his prison sentence.

▶ Recent developments on 4 judicial proceedings⁴

The Observatory has been informed that the charges against the following have been dropped on appeal in January 2001: **Messrs. Javier Orlando Marín; Armando Valvuená Pallares; Socorro Rincón** of the Human Promotion Corporation (CORPHU, or "Corporación para la Promoción Humana"). They have been freed in

April and May 2000. **Mrs. Yolanda Amaya** Director of the "La Escuela" Educational Services Corporation ("Corporación de Servicios Educativos 'La Escuela'") is still under persecution for rebellion crime. The criminal proceedings against these defenders had been started on the basis of reports from the military departments and anonymous witnesses, and had been instigated by the Regional Justice Department (faceless justice), a system widely denounced by the national and international community.

⁴ See Annual Report 1999



Cuba

▶ Harassment of members of the CUTC¹

On 13 October 2000, **Mr. Pedro Alvarez Ramos**, Secretary-General of the Unitary Council of Cuban Workers (CUTC, or "Consejo Unitario de Trabajadores Cubano"), affiliated with the Latin American Workers' Central (CLAT, or "Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores"), was arrested in La Havana in a neighborhood known as Lawton. At the time of his arrest, he was headed towards **Mrs. Gladys Linares Blanco's** home, also a member of the CUTC. A press conference, to which foreign journalists and the independent Cuban press were invited, was supposed to have taken place at Mrs. Linares Blanco's residence on the themes of the next CUTC convention, anticipated for 20 and 21 October 2000.

Mrs. Gladys Linares Blanco and her husband, **Humberto Mones Lafita**, were also arrested in their homes, as well as **Carmelo Agustín Fernández**, member of the CUTC. Two other members of the CUTC were arrested and beaten in the city of Güines as they were planning to go to La Havana to assist in this press conference. All were released by the afternoon, with the exception of Mr. Pedro Pablo Alvarez, who was accused of "resisting arrest". He was transferred

to the Valle Grande prison, in the La Havana province, and was retained until 25 January 2001; he was set free because the attorney did not find enough evidence to indict him and keep him in custody.

Mr. Alvarez had already been arrested on 7 August 2000, when a first wave of repression towards the members of the CUTC took place. He was taken to an unknown place and was set free on the night of 8 August after having been detained for an entire day in the premises of the State Security Department (DES, or "Departamento de Seguridad del Estado") in the outskirts of La Havana.

Since 4 August, agents from security services have "visited" **Carmelo Díaz Fernández, Gladys Linares Blanco, Lázaro Cuesta Collazo, Maybel Padilla Pérez y Oscar Espinosa Chepe**, members of the CUTC, and threatened to charge them with disobedience if the CUTC convention took place. Shortly afterwards, Carmelo Díaz Fernández, Gladys Linares Blanco, Humberto Mones, Luis López Torres, and Ramón Mederos were arrested and later released.

This wave of arrests had the obvious goal of preventing the second preparatory meeting of the CUTC convention which was to take place on 8 August.

¹ See urgent appeals CUB 001/0008/OBS 082.01 and CUB 002/0010/OBS 109.01



Ecuador



Defamation¹

The Observatory has received worrying information about recent declarations by the supreme Ecuadorian authorities concerning the work of human rights organisations.

On 28 May 2001, the newspaper *El Universo* published an interview with Ecuador's Vice-President, Pedro Pinto, in which he described the social movements as "coarse and damaging", and declared that "the far left now has another face, presenting itself as a social movement, a

teaching, or an ecology in certain cases, and as a human rights movement in others".

Forty-eight hours after these declarations, Ecuador's President, Dr. Gustavo Novoa, declared that the human rights defenders, "are nowhere in evidence, while the teachers' strike continues to violate the right to education". The Foreign Minister also used language critical of NGOs following the publication of the latest Amnesty International report.

¹ See urgent appeal ECU 001/0006/OBS 058



El Salvador

▷ Arbitrary detention¹

The Observatory has been informed of the arbitrary detention, at the beginning of July 2000, of **Mr. Jorge Sedán** in the department of Sonsonate. This detention appears to be linked to Mr. Sedán's activities promoting freedom of expression, information, and the press in El Salvador, and his role in the denunciation of illegal phone-tapping. Everything suggests that this abduction was intended to prevent him from testifying as the main witness in the judicial inquiry opened into these practices.

▷ Search of an NGO²

On the nights of 29 October and 3 December 2000, the offices of the **Entre Amigos** associa-

tion, which defends the rights of homosexuals and transsexuals, were visited during the night, during which the cables of the recently installed alarm were cut and the offices were searched. A list of members was removed, along with cash. No equipment was stolen, as the intruders focused their attention solely on the lists of members and other politically interesting documents. These facts come in addition to a number of crimes perpetrated recently against the members of El Salvador's homosexual and transsexual community.

The Observatory recalls that the Executive Director of **Entre Amigos**, **William Hernández**, received death threats in March and November 1999, and again in February 2000. After a vast local and international campaign, he was finally granted police protection.

¹ A letter based on this information has been sent by the Observatory to the Salvadorian authorities

² See urgent appeals SLV 001/9911/OBS 074 and SLV 001/001/OBS 002



Guatemala

Extrajudicial executions and threats

Killing of two CONAP members¹

The Observatory was informed by a number of Guatemalan and international organisations, notably Greenpeace, of the assassination of two members of the National Council of Protected Areas (Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas - CONAP). The assassinated were lawyer **M. Erwin Haroldo Ochoa López** and Administrative Assistant **M. Julio Armando Vásquez Ramirez**, on 29 February 2000 in Izabal, Guatemala.

M. Erwin Haroldo Ochoa López and Julio Armando Vásquez Ramirez were allegedly killed as a result of their activities which promote the protection of the ecosystem and the environment in the region of Izabal: the fight against illegal deforestation, the dredging and loss of sediment in the region of La Graciosa, and the destruction of swamps in the Chocon Machacas.

Attempted assassination / death threats against trade union leaders²

Attempted assassination of M. Rafael Fuentes López

On 4 May 2000, **Mr. Edwin Rafael Fuentes López**, a trade union leader and representative of the workers of the Palo Gordo sugar factory, was the victim of an attempted assassination on the part of Mario Varcia, foreman of the above-mentioned sugar refinery. The attempt having failed, its author made death threats to the trade-union leader.

The same reports add that landholder circles on the South coast have threatened with death trade-union leaders **José E. Pinzón** and **Rigoberto Dueñas Morales**, respectively Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Central General de los Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG). The reports attribute responsibility to Fermín Viejo, of the El Tesoro, S.A. and San Román plant, and Francisco Zúñiga Fumagally, of the San Rafael Panama and Ofelia, S.A. plant.

¹ See urgent appeal GTM 001/0003/OBS 011

² See urgent appeal GTM 004/0005/OBS 044



Kidnapping and killing of Mr. Oswaldo Monzón Lima³

The Families of the Disappeared in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA) and CLADEHIT were informed of the death, on 23 June 2000, of union leader **Oswaldo Monzón Lima**, Secretary General of the Union of Fuel Pilots of Escuintla.

On 17 October 1998, Mr. Monzón Lima was threatened with death by Mr. Mario Ortiz Barranco, proprietor of the company "Transportes J. O. Gaitán, S.A.". In that context, he said to him: "It is not possible to leave enemies alive because [such people are] very dangerous". This act was denounced to the Ministerio Público on October 19 of the same year, as well as to the First Court of Peace, Escuintla. On 23 October 1998, he was dismissed from work for having created the union organisation in the company, and has since then suffered harassment for which Mr. Ortiz Barranco is a suspect.

Assassination of Mrs. Elena Mejía and Mr. Quino Matzar⁴

Mrs. María Elena Mejía and **Mr. Alfredo Quino Matzar**, leaders of the Coordinación Regional de Cooperativas Integrales (CORCI), were murdered by unidentified armed men on 20 July 2000, in the area of San Andrés Semetabaj, region of Sololá.



Assassinations and attacks on academics⁵

According to information from the group GuaUnidos, based on information from the Al-

liance Against Impunity, **Maura Ofelia Paniagua González**, jurist in the law office of the San Carlos University and an active member of the movement of Guatemalan women, was murdered on 30 October 2000. Heavily armed men came to her home, tricked her into coming out of her house, and then shot her repeatedly. The same source reported that, on 26 October 2000, armed men kidnapped **Mr. Carlos Palma García**, university student, member of the Association of Dispersed Refugees (ARDIGUA), and member of the peasant's movement. His body was found on 27 October with signs of strangulation.

The Observatory reminds that the members of the Guatemalan Foundation of Forensic Anthropology and the Association of University Students (AEU) have been the victims of attacks since October 2000.



Death threats against a member of the Casa del Migrante⁶

Since January 2000, **Mr. Walter Arreaga**, Legal Adviser of the Human Rights Office of the Casa del Migrante in Tecun Umán, Department of San Marcos, has been watched and followed on various occasions by unidentified persons in an unidentifiable vehicle. This situation has become more acute during the current month. In addition, there have been numerous death threats uttered in anonymous telephone calls, the last of which was made to the house of his parents, on 9 March at 10 a.m. referring to their son by saying, "He will not live through this weekend". This

³ See urgent appeal GTM 005/0006/OBS 061

⁴ See urgent appeal GTM 006/0008/OBS 078

⁵ See urgent appeal GTM 008/0011/OBS 111

⁶ See urgent appeal GTM 002/0003/OBS 018



organization especially protects the migrant population, a highly vulnerable sector.

▶ Threats against CERIGUA members⁷

On 23 June, at approximately 1:50 p.m. in the offices of the Centre of Informative Reports on Guatemala (Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala - CERIGUA), an anonymous telephone call was received stating: "We know where you are and we are going to kill you".

The members of the Centre have been victims of similar threats in the past, motivated by their diffusion of information and their fight for freedom of expression, the means for democratisation, and the balance of information. Before the threats, CERIGUA Director Ileana Alamilla affirmed her belief in, "The right to the free expression of thought can not be waived", and that the organization will redouble its efforts, "to accompany the civil society in the conquest for a new nation".

▶ Death threats against Rosa Tuis Guarcax⁸

The Observatory was informed that **Mrs. Raso Tuis Guarcax**, member of the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA, or "Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala"), received death threats on 2 December 2000, along with her family, following her pressuring of the civil servant who raped 12-year-

old Ana María Pichol to come before justice. The author of these threats identified himself as, "a member of a group of abductors and murderers who are always armed".

The information received adds that, since August, Mrs. Rosa Tuis Guarcax has received four telephone calls warning that she should put an end to her pressures. The father of the girl, **Mr. Nicolás Pichol Cael**, also a member of the CONAVIGUA, has received death threats as well after having brought charges against the presumed rapist. The perpetrator declared to Ana María, during the rape, that he would kill her and her family if she defended herself and denounced him to the authorities. This man is an ex-military representative who presently occupies an auxiliary position at City Hall in San Pedro Yepocapa, Chinaltenango.

Following the charges made by the father of the victim, the civil servant was arrested on 28 April 2000, but set free four days later. Mrs. Rosa Tuis Guarcax pressed charges in the name of the CONAVIGUA, which is involved in the follow-up of investigations made on the massacres by security forces during the civil conflict in Guatemala.

▶ Death threats against Mario Polanco⁹

On 6 December 2000, **Mr. Mario Polanco**, member of the Mutual Support Group (GAM, or "Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo"), received a death threat by telephone in which he was also questioned on the organization's car model. On 7 December 2000, the Mitsubishi Montero, model 90, property of GAM, was stolen in front

7 See urgent appeal GTM 0005/0006/OBS 061

8 See urgent appeal GTM 009/0012/OBS 128

9 See urgent appeal GTM 009/0012/OBS 128



of Mr. Polanco's home by armed men who ordered the driver to get off the vehicle, and threatened the neighbours and passers-by, forcing them to lay down on the floor.

On 3 December 2000, **Mr. Dionosio Camajá Sánchez**, also a member of the GAM, was violently hit by Juan Alberto Us Tiquiram, former

army collaborator. This violent climate prevailing in Guatemala was aggravated in part by the declarations of the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Barrientos, who qualified as "terrorists actions" all public manifestations by human rights organizations in Guatemala.

Attacks

▶ Attack on a trade union¹⁰

On 13 October 1999, a group of armed men attacked the leaders of the Izabak Banana Workers' Union (SITRABI, or "**Sindicato de Trabajadores Bananeros de Izabak**"), in the municipality of Morales, department of Izabel, forcing them to renounce their trade union membership and activities inside the BANDEGUA company. They then forced the Secretary-General to convene all his colleagues, and to sign the act of renunciation in front of a video camera. They also forced them to cancel the demonstration that was due to take place the next day against the sacking of 897 employees, in violation of the Collective Pact on Working Conditions. Finally, under threat of death, the armed men forced the workers to leave the region with their families.

▶ Attack/ Rape¹¹

On Monday, 24 October 2000, at 11 a.m., the Women Progress Association (AMVA, or "Asociación Mujer Vamos Adelante's")

headquarters was attacked by five armed men who arrived under the pretext of requesting information.

According to the reports, the armed men forced the people who were present (about 15) to hand over their wallets, locked the women in a room with a technician whose pants were taken off, and violently tied their hands and feet. They went on to steal the computer equipment (containing the Association's most important information), and damaged the offices.

Afterwards, after having tried to sexually abuse a woman, they took out another woman from the locked room and raped her.

The victims then called the National Civilian Police "Policia Nacional Ciudadana" (PNC) and the Public Minister. The agents took some time before arriving, despite the fact that the organization's offices are located only 300 meters away from a police station.

¹⁰ See urgent appeal GTM 004/9911/OBS 072

¹¹ See urgent appeal GTM 007/0011/OBS 110



Judicial proceedings¹²

The Observatory was informed of a complaint made against **Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu Tum**, the 1992 Nobel Prize Peace winner, accusing her of crimes of treason against the country, and violation of the Constitution.

According to the information received by the Aliances Against Impunity ("Alianza Contra la Impunidad"), lawyer and active defender of militaries Julio Cintron Galvez brought charges against Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu Tum.

This affair is considered to be a reaction to Mrs. Menchu Tum's complaints before the Spanish courts for grave human rights violations and genocide occurred in Guatemala.

¹² See urgent appeal GTM 003/0004/OBS 027



Mexico

▶ Murder and attempted murder of OCSS members¹

Mr. Misael Ascencio Dominguez, the leader of the Sierra del Sur Peasant Association (OCSS, or "Organización Campesina de la Sierra del Sur") was slashed to death with a machete on 7 October 2000, between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m., on his way back from a funeral wake a few metres from his house in the municipality of Tepetitla.

Mr. Misael Ascencio Dominguez was the brother of **Mr. José Ascencio Dominguez**, one of the leaders and founders of the OCSS. According to the OCSS, everything suggests that Mr. Misael Ascencio Dominguez was murdered because of his pro-human rights activities.

According to the information received from the Mexican League for the Defence of Human Rights - Liga Mexicana por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (LIMEDDH), 48 members of the Sierra del Sur Peasant Association were killed and during the period covered by the current administration, 4 members of the OCSS were murdered in the municipality of Coyuca de Benitez: **José Luis Rodríguez** on 15 April 2000, **José Martínez Ranión** and **Felipe Nava Gomez** on 20 April 2000 and **Misael Dominguez**.

▶ Assassination attempt²

Mr. Marco Antonio Abadicio Mayo, the leader of the Sierra del Sur Peasant Association (OCSS) in Atoyaquillo, State of Guerrero, was caught in a fusillade on 19 July 2000 at around 11 p.m. on his way home. With a bullet in his chest, he sought refuge in his sister's house before falling unconscious. Picked up by his relatives a few minutes later, he was taken to Acapulco General Hospital where he recovered.

Mr. Marco Abadicio Mayo has declared that he has no personal enemies, his one "crime" being to seek a hearing for his community's demands. He added that he was unable to recognise his aggressors, given the darkness at the place of the murder attempt, but that he suspected that they belonged to the paramilitary groups in that part of the country.

It should be recalled that, on 12 January 2000, Mr. Abadicio Mayo was arrested and tortured for 12 hours by members of the army who accused him, between beating and threatening him, of abducting the young man Erasmo Ponciano and providing food to guerilleros. After that, according to the complaints filed by Mr. Abadicio Mayo and his relatives, the harassment against him continued, and persons from outside the community were seen prowling around his house at night.

¹ See urgent appeal MEX 011/0010/OBS 106

² See urgent appeal MEX 009/0007/OBS 074



▶ Enforced disappearance of Mr. Camargo Ruíz³

The Observatory has been alerted to the abduction of **Mr. Plácido Camargo Ruíz**, a primary school teacher and militant in the educational sector, and a member of Section X of the National Educational Workers' Union (SNTE). He was abducted on 16 June 2000 on his way to work in the Federal District of Mexico. Despite long searches by his family and friends in hospitals and prisons, he has not yet been found. A complaint was filed on 19 June at the Lost and/or Absent Persons Help Centre (CAPEA) of the Federal District Attorney-General's Office (reference "Report 191").

According to Section IX of the SNTE, Mr. Camargo Ruíz's disappearance is the work of a paramilitary group, or federal police detectives, as reprisal for his activities during the May-June 2000 teachers' strike. According to the same group, other teachers, among them **Victor Pineda Enestrosa**, **Gregorio Alfonso Alvarado López** and **Modesto Patolzin**, have been arrested for political reasons, and have disappeared without any indications by the authorities as to their whereabouts.

▶ Threats

Threats against Juan López Villanueva⁴

The Observatory has been informed of serious threats made to Juan López Villanueva, an attorney

at the Legal Department of the Human Rights Centre "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" at San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas.

These messages were received by e-mail in the following form: "If you continue to 'play the fool', I'll kill you. I hope that you will think carefully before showing this message, if not you will come to a bad end".

On 19 January 2000, a complaint concerning these death threats was filed with the Federal Ministry of Public Affairs, followed by a second complaint with the State Commission for Human Rights, reference n° CEDH/ SCR/ 0009 /01 /00. The latter file has been transferred to the National Commission for Human Rights.

Threats against Arturo Solis⁵

On 27 January 2000, **Mr. Arturo Solis**, Director of the Centre for Frontier Studies and the Promotion of Human Rights (CEF-PDH, or "Centro de Estudios Fronterizos y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos") at Ciudad Reynosa, State of Tamaulipas, received an anonymous letter placed outside his office door. On this letter was a drawing of "a dead eagle, with blood on its beak and a brush between its claws, beneath a devil". According to Mr. Solis, "The eagle represents the fact that I am being watched and that death is awaiting me".

These threats are supposedly linked to the complaint filed by Mr. Solis against drug traffickers, who had threatened journalists in his organisation that had denounced the situation of general violence caused by drug traffickers, particularly at Ciudad Miguel Aleman.

3 See urgent appeal MEX 008/0007/OBS 071

4 See urgent appeal MEX 001/0002/OBS 005

5 See urgent appeal MEX 001/0002/OBS 005



Threats against some defenders of indigenous populations⁶

On 10 May 2000, **Mr. Maurilio Santiago Reyes**, an attorney and a defender of Indians' rights, received a number of telephone calls by persons who remained silent when he picked up the receiver. During one of the calls taken by his employee **María del Pilar Marroquin**, an unknown voice finally answered "We'll have your skin".

On 9 May 2000, Mr. Maurilio Santiago and Mrs. María del Pilar Marroquin had noticed a van without registration plates driving around Mr. Maurilio Santiago's home at Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca. These happenings could be linked to the complaints that they filed with a criminal court against civil servants for violation of the rights of Chatino natives on 12 and 13 April 2000, when several of them were confused with Central Americans without papers, and were arrested and mistreated. The day after the complaint was filed, purported policemen took away **Mr. Moises Cruz Sánchez**, the leader of the Oaxaquena Indian Network ("Red Indígena Oaxaquena"), freeing him several days later.

In March 2000, an arrest warrant was issued based on accusations of kidnapping probably made by the municipal authorities against Mr. Maurilio Santiago Reyes, very likely in reprisal for his activities defending natives' rights in the Mixteca region.

Moreover, on 16 April 2000, six armed individuals led by Armando Arguelles, federal agent, insulted, threatened with death and beat

Pr. Raúl Gatica Bautista, leader of the Popular Indegenous Council of Oaxaca (CIPO) "Ricardo Flores Magón", as well as his 17 year-old son. Several policemen of San Isidro Monjes, municipality of Xoxocotlán, managed to stop the attackers. Mr. Guatica Bautista filed a complaint with the Ministerio Publico of the federal Police.

Threats against Rubio Saldivar and Miguel Hernández⁷

The Observatory has been informed of threats against **Andrés Rubio Salvidar**, a historian, and **Rey Miguel Hernández**, a journalist. These persons are Coordinator and member respectively of the Coordinating Committee for the Defence of Human Rights in Costa Chica, State of Guerrero.

In early September 2000, both are reported to have received a message from the local commandant of the Guerrero Criminal Investigation Department, warning them that, "If [they] went to La Concordia, [they] should expect to suffer the consequences".

These threats are linked to investigations carried out by the Committee, and the publication of an article by Mr. Hernández based on denunciations received in December 1999 from Mixteca natives from the community of La Concordia, in the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres. The article insists that a climate of serious violence exists in the area, which includes the formation of militia groups protected by the Guerrero Criminal Investigation Department and the Mexican Federal Army.

⁶ See urgent appeal MEX 005/0005/OBS 039 ; MEX / 0003/OBS 009 and MEX 004/0005/OBS 033

⁷ See urgent appeal MEX 010/0009/OBS 098



▶ Acts of harassment

Harassment of members of the "Unión de Pueblos contra la Represión de la región Loxicha"⁸

Several members of the People's Union Against Repression in the Loxicha Region ("Unión de Pueblos Contra la Represión en la Región Loxicha") have been harassed and intimidated while providing help to families in difficulty in the Loxicha region.

On 11 October 1999, at around 8 p.m., in the town of Oaxaca, **Mrs. María Estela García Ramírez**, a Zapotec native from this region, was attempting to make a phone call from a phone booth when two members of the police investigation department approached her and violently snatched away her phone card; two persons in civilian dress were standing a short distance away. Similarly, on 17 October 1999, at 3 p.m. in Oaxaca, María Estela was in the company of **Mrs. Nestora Ramírez** when the same members of the police investigation department began following them openly, walking immediately beside them. This situation continued, with the policemen remaining visible and a short distance away when they entered buildings.

Also, during the transportation of food for families in difficulty from Oaxaca to Miahuatlan, 4 patrols of police investigation, prevention and state transit department officers ostensibly followed the truck. Policemen and persons in civilian clothing took photographs. On 10 November 1999, on the road from Oaxaca to Mexico City, two policemen mounted the truck to check passengers'

identities. After questioning María Estela about her place of origin, and learning that she was from Miahuatlan, they searched her in a particularly violent and aggressive manner, finally leaving her possessions scattered across the truck.

Harassment of Mr. Isaiás Martínez Gervacio⁹

The Observatory has been given information that has led it to fear for the safety of **Mr. Isaiás Martínez Gervacio**, a member of the Association of the Families of Disappeared Detainees and Victims of Human Rights Violations (AFADEM-FEDEFAM, or "Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos y Víctimas de Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos"), State of Guerrero.

On 2 March 2000, Mr. Martínez was persistently trailed by an unknown, armed person. On the same day, a person aged around 22-25, purporting to be an agent of the Ministry of Public Affairs, presented himself at his house (without showing any official identification) and asked to see his son, Misael Martínez, who disappeared in March 1978.

Following this "visit", Mr. Isaiás Martínez Gervacio visited the Ministry of Public Affairs at Atoyac de Alvarez. The official in charge, Lic. Ernesto Jacobo García, informed him that he had not sent anybody, but admitted handing a document to the criminal investigation police (which would appear to be the document presented to Mr. Martínez Gervacio's children by the would-be agent).

Given the many acts of persecution against him, Mr. Isaiás Martínez Gervacio presented himself

⁸ See urgent appeal MEX 001/0002/OBS 005

⁹ See urgent appeal MEX 003/0003/OBS 017



to the Commandant of the Police Prevention Department, Mr. Nefali Ponce Velez, but no protection was made available to him.

These events took place after Mr. Martínez Gervacio had taken part in a press conference, organised on 1 March 2000 by the AFADEM Executive Committee on the Serious and Systematic Human Rights Violations and the Situation of Impunity in the State of Guerrero, in particular in the region of Atoyac. On the same day, he accompanied Mr. Joel Rojas to the Ministry of Public Affairs in order to identify the person presumed to be responsible for the abduction of Mr Rojas' son, Rogaciano Rojas Rojas, who disappeared on 28 November 1999.

Mr. Isaías Martínez Gervacio is very involved in the activities of AFADEM, which is calling for the "Presentation Alive" of more than 600 abduction victims in the State of Guerrero. On 20 February 2000, during his activities, unknown persons followed and photographed him.

Harassment of members of an NGO¹⁰

On 6 June 2000, between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., during an ordinary meeting of the coordinating team of the "All Rights for All" Network of Civil Human Rights Associations (**Red de Organismos Civiles de Derechos Humanos "Todos los Derechos para Todos"**), two persons dressed in blue, on board a white Pointer (registration number 556KSM) from the federal district and parked opposite the network's offices, filmed the persons entering and leaving the premises. When the network staff noticed this and approached to photograph them, they fled.

¹⁰ See urgent appeal MEX 006/0006/OBS 050

Neighbours said that they had already seen the same suspicious vehicle parked close to the offices for several hours on 2 June.

On 6 June, the Red filed a complaint against the authors of these deeds with Ministry of Public Affairs agency no. 3 of the Attorney-General's Office of the capital, Cuauhtémoc local office, reference no. USD03/01258/2000-06.

On the night of 4 May, Red members had noticed two white cars, a Ford Stratus and a Nissan, with several persons inside, in front of their office. Both looked like vehicles used by the police investigation department.

The "All Rights for All" Network of Civil Human Rights Associations points out that these facts reveal the existence of constant surveillance, on top of the 150 acts of harassment perpetrated between 1995 and 1999 against various human rights defenders and human rights organisations belonging to the National Network.

Harassment of Mrs. Altamirano Hernández¹¹

Mrs. Eracia Altamirano Hernández, a member of the AFADEM section of Atoyac de Alvarez, State of Guerrero, is currently the subject of harassment. Like the unexplained fire at her home on 1 July 2000, these acts are said to be due to her human rights activities in the Tierra Caliente region (State of Guerrero). Her activities are directed essentially towards combating the impunity enjoyed by human rights violators (in particular by those who abduct people), as well raising awareness of and providing education in human rights.

¹¹ See urgent appeal MEX 008/0007/OBS 071



Harassment of LIMEDDH members¹²

The Observatory has been alerted by the Mexican League for the Defence of Human Rights (LIMEDDH) that **Dr. Adrián Ramírez López**, the LIMEDDH President and Vice-President of the FIDH, and **Sara Rico Ramírez**, who heads the Victim Legal Support System, were summoned on 21 September 2000 by the General Military Justice Tribunal to appear on 6 October 2000 for ministerial inquiries relating to the initial inquiry no. VII RM/02/2000. The summons did not state the reasons why the LIMEDDH members had been asked to appear.

During the ministerial inquiries, Lt. Miguel Ochoa Pineda received their declarations as witnesses with regard to two urgent actions filed by the LIMEDDH in reaction to appeals by the "Fray Bartolomé de las Casas" Human Rights Centre (even though, given the source of the appeals, the LIMEDDH leaders could not in any way be considered as witnesses of the facts).

Dr. Ramírez López was again summoned by the General Military Justice Tribunal (file AP-VII-27266) to appear on 24 October 2000 at 10 a.m. for ministerial inquiries relating to preliminary inquiry n° SC/295/2000. This second summons did not specify, also either the reasons why he had been asked to appear, nor the facts underlying the inquiry. After talking with an agent of the Public Ministry of Military Affairs, the LIMEDDH learned that the summons was related to a press release, dated 10 August 2000, concerning aggressions suffered by the managers of the San Mateo de Yocuntindoo office and the "Las de socorro" civil association.

¹² See urgent appeal MEX 012/0010/OBS 108

In August 1998, two members of the "Fray Francisco de Vitoria O.P.". Human Rights Centre had been summoned to appear in similar circumstances.

► Ill-treatment¹³

On 19 June 2000, at 7.00 a.m., a large number of criminal investigation officers and the local police of Río Bravo and Reynosa entered violently into the offices of the "Duro Bags Manufacturing Company" at Río Bravo, Tamaulipas. Employees had given notice of a strike intended to improve their working conditions, obtain the respect of their individual and collective rights (such as freedom of association), and gain recognition of the trade union management, which had been refused by the employers' authorities.

The policemen, after threatening the persons present with expulsion, stated that this work stoppage was illegal, hit the workers, and arrested the union leaders. One female employee, who had tried to calm the police agents, was threatened by an agent pointing a machine gun at her and saying: "If you do not shut up, I'll kill you". Another female employee was severely hit in the abdomen, and had to be taken to hospital.

The Observatory has since been informed of the presumed enforced disappearance of **Mr. Eliud Amaguer**, the leader of the "Duro Bags Manufacturing" employees, when on his way to Tijuana. The incident apparently took place during the journey between Río Bravo (Tamaulipas) and Monterrey (Nuevo León). The employees were freed against payment of global bail of \$ 2,000 USD.

¹³ See urgent appeal MEX 007/0006/OBS 059.01



▷ Defamations¹⁴

The Observatory has been informed of persistent verbal aggression by the government authorities of the State of Nuevo León against Sister **Consuelo Morales Elizondo**, the Director of CADHAC in the State of Nuevo León.

On 7 September 2000, the Secretary-General of the Government of Nuevo León, Mr. José Luis Coindreau, declared to the press, in reference to Consuelo Morales Elizondo: "What this lady has denounced to the United Nations and the OAS is totally false. CADHAC has repeatedly betrayed the truth, and what she has reported is totally untrue" (ABC newspaper, Friday 8 September 2000, p. 6B). These declarations refer to complaints and denunciations by CADHAC of human rights violations suffered by detainees at the prison (Social Readaptation Centre) of Nuevo León.

▷ Theft of archives and equipment¹⁵

On 3 August 2000, **Mrs. Angélica Ayala Ortiz**, the LIMEDDH Coordinator at Oaxaca, noted that unknown persons had entered her house illegally, gone through her archives and desk, and removed a portable computer (laptop) and six diskettes containing information about the work of her organisation.

These events took place a few days after LIMEDDH had carried out research on the Ixcotel and Elta penitential centres, and on the state of health of native Zapotec prisoners from the region of Loxichas; they also occurred just before the organisation was due to present its annual report on the occasion of the anniversary of the LIMEDDH house at Oaxaca.

These facts were declared to Mr. Gregorio Mendoza, from the Ministry of Public Affairs, and recorded under n° 143 (P.M.E./2000).

These facts join a long list of acts of intimidation and unfounded accusations against LIMEDDH in the State of Oaxaca (see Annual Report 1999).

¹⁴ See urgent appeal MEX 010/0009/OBS 098

¹⁵ See urgent appeal MEX 009/0008/OBS 080



Nicaragua

▷ Defamation campaign and threats against Mrs. Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía¹

On 23 May 2000, the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights (CENIDH) received a handwritten letter addressed to its President, **Mrs. Vilma Nuñez de Escorcía**, Vice-President of the FIDH and member of the OMCT Delegates' Assembly. The letter contained a series of accusations couched in vulgar language and serious death threats, warning, "Get ready, because the FUAC (Frente Unido Andrés Castro) is going to destroy you".

These threats follow statements made in March 2000 by national police spokesman and former Interior Minister René Herrera Zúñiga, accusing Mrs. Vilma Nuñez of blocking the inquiry into the death of Camilo Turcios, the former head of the FUAC armed group, and of "helping" the supposed author of this murder. These accusations were relayed by several media, in particular the *La Noticia* newspaper and Radio Corporación, which accused CENIDH of "disturbing social peace". Other media let it be understood that Mrs. Vilma Nuñez's physical elimination would be a "solution" to the conflict in the north of the country.

Following these accusations, threats and personal attacks, Mrs. Vilma Nuñez filed a complaint with the Directorate-General of

Criminal Research of the national police, on 30 May 2000 at Managua, and demanded protective measures (*medidas cautelares*) from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. These measures were requested by the Commission on 17 July 2000, and implemented by the government on 17 November.

Despite this, Mrs. Vilma Nuñez has remained the target of threats throughout 2000, and was the subject of a defamation campaign (false accusations, threat of criminal proceedings) by Interior Minister José Bosco Marengo Cardenal at the start of 2001. This campaign, also relayed by the government press, is directly linked with CENIDH's role in defending a 70 year-old American volunteer nurse, **Dorothy Granados**, in the town of Mulukukú, under prosecution after being unjustly accused of supporting the Sandinist movement. On 13 January 2001, the Managua Appeal Court called on Mr. Bosco Marengo Cardenal to "respect Mrs. Vilma Nuñez' freedom and safety", after she had filed an application for protection against threats of illegal detention. However, on 16 January, the Interior Minister threatened Mrs. Vilma Nuñez with judicial proceedings in reprisal for her accusing him of corruption.

¹ See urgent appeal NIC 001/0003/OBS 020.01 and letter to the Nicaraguan authorities, dated 25 April 2000



▷ Defamation campaign against the Si Mujer association²

During 2000, members of the **Si Mujer** association, and in particular its Directress **Mrs. Ana María Pizarro**, were the target of a vast campaign of defamation and threats in the context of discussions on the reform of the Penal Code to remove any form of therapeutic abortion.

In addition, during the "Topics and Debates" television programme chaired by journalist Luis Mora, Deputy Orlando Mayorga from the Christian Path and Christian Alliance party suggested that Si Mujer's forfeit its legal status and the organisation be closed. He also threatened the organisation's employees with imprisonment, accusing them of being murderers.

Si Mujer is a non-profit organisation, working on women's, adolescents' and children's rights, and specialising in questions of sexual health. Si Mujer has a legal status granted by the National Assembly by virtue of Decree n° 442, published in the Official Journal n° 232 of 6 December 1991.

▷ Threats against Mrs. Ana Quiroz

Mrs. Ana Quiroz, who heads the Civilian Emergency and Reconstruction Coordination Unit ("Coordinadora Civil para la Emergencia y la Reconstrucción"), has been threatened with being stripped of her Nicaraguan nationality for publicly denouncing government corruption. This act of reprisal was reversed following two appeals made with the help of CENIDH in February 2000.

▷ Threats against the Nicaraguan associations

In December 2000, the Interior Minister announced that he would call on 20 consultants to launch an inquiry, within the Department for the Registration and Control of Associations, on the country's hundreds of NGOs. The inquiry was intended to check their legal status and accounts, stating that certain of them were working "outside the law". According to information received, this announcement was intended as a threat, and should not be read as an effort to strengthen the voluntary movement. On 18 December, a call for candidates was launched in the press to recruit these 20 persons.

² See urgent appeal NIC 002/0007/OBS 067



Peru

▷ Defamation campaign against NGOs¹

The Observatory has been informed of defamatory comments made by the Peruvian authorities against human rights NGOs. NGOs have been accused, by senior government officials, of tarnishing Peru's image in order to gain attention. In particular, the President of Congress accused them of being in the pay of "recycled communists", and demanded that they be the subject of an inquiry, and that a call be made by Congressional Vice-President Luis Delgado Aparicio in order to prevent such organisations from "damaging national interests". NGO members have also been accused of having themselves referred to as defenders of human rights in international bodies, in order "to gain freedom for terrorists".

▷ Harassment against Gorge Farfán Martínez²

The Observatory was informed of harassment made against lawyer **Gorge Farfán Martínez**, member of the rural development center "Villa Nazareth" of the Chuculanas diocese, institutional member of the National Coordination of Human Rights, and lawyer of peasants' cooperatives from

the Frias district, Morropón province, Piura department.

On 3 April 2000, the provincial Prosecutor of Morropón, Julio Vargas Valer, gave the bishop of Chulucanas a copy of a police document n° 05-2000-C-PNP Frias. This document accuses Mr. Farfán and Mr. Higinio Castillo Calle, judge of peace from the Frias district, of being at the head of an initiative to hold a peasants' co-operative march "El Común" of Frias, against the provincial Prosecutor and the penal judge of Morropón. This march was to protest the educated trials against the peasants' co-operatives and their members.

▷ Harassment against Martha Cueva Muñoz³

The Observatory was informed on 7 June 2000 that **Mrs. Martha Cueva Muñoz**, a lawyer, human rights defender, and Legal Adviser to the Comité Vicarial de Derechos Humanos del Vicariato Apostólico de Pucallpa, department of Ucayali, was falsely accused of acts of terrorism. There is an attempt to implicate her in the trial of other persons accused of various crimes, including the crime of terrorism.

In December 1998, during the violent eviction of 10 families which occupied some property on the Yansen sawmill, the persons concerned and the owners of the sawmill requested that

¹ The Observatory sent a letter to the Peruvian authorities dated 12/11/1999

² See urgent appeal PER 001/0004/OBS 025

³ See urgent appeal PER 002/0006/OBS 049



Mrs. Cueva Muñoz intervene. Subsequently, the owners of the sawmill started penal proceedings against the evicted families whom they accused of crimes against public safety and public order, arson, homicide, and abuse of authority; they attempted to broaden the original charges by including the crime of terrorism and implicating in it Mrs. Martha Cueva Muñoz.

Although this request was refused by the provincial prosecutor of Coronel Portillo, the Prosecutor of the Republic has filed an appeal procedure which has been submitted to the Superior Prosecutor of Ucayali, Dr. Lorenzo Angulo Rodríguez, for decision.

▷ Threats / serious risks⁴

On 12 June 2000, at approximately 8.50 a.m., the wife of **Mr. Jesús Agreda Paredes**, President of the Association of Defence of Human Rights of Tacna (ADDSH), and member of the National Coordination of Human Rights, received an anonymous phone call to her home. A man's voice said: "Tell your husband not to meddle in the Pachia case, because otherwise we shall kill him".

This threat is linked to the legal defence undertaken by ADDSH-Tacna in the case of the torture and death of **Mr. Nelson Tiburcio Díaz Marcos**, detained in Pachia on 12 May 2000 at approximately 3 p.m. by police force member Victor Pachas Manani. On the same day, 12 May, at about 9 p.m., another police official Carlos Laqui came to the Díaz Marcos home to report that he had died. The victim bore evident signs of torture. In view of these two facts, a penal

complaint was lodged with the Provincial Prosecutor of Tacna for homicide accusing the justice administration and police agents Victor Pachas Manani and Carlos Laqui. However, on 6 June, ADDEH-Tacna requested a broadening of the complaint to include the crime of torture followed by death.

▷ Threats against Rosalia Stork Salazar⁵

Dr. Rosalia Stork Salazar, lawyer and President of the Human Rights Commission "Alto Huallaga" (CODHAH), Aucayacu, Huanuco department, was alerted on August 2000 to the possible destruction of her home and office, a decision most likely made by the PNP Major Fernando Quispe Huaman, Auyacu's Commissioner. This official assured that he would discover the elements implicating the association in terrorist activities.

These threats seem to be tied to the complaints made by Dr. Rosalia Stork Salazar, in the name of her organization, in front of the mixed tribunal of Auyacu against the PNP Major Quispe Huanan for crimes including abuse of authority, acts of torture, violation of a home, illicit appropriation, and diverse threats.

▷ Robbery in two NGO offices⁶

On 1 November 2000, during the night, strangers illegally entered the **Commission of Human**

⁴ See urgent appeal PER 003/0006/OBS 054

⁵ See urgent appeal PER 004/0008/OBS 088

⁶ See urgent appeal PER 005/0011/OBS 112



Rights (COMISEDEH)'s office and took two computers and their disks, which contained important information on human rights violations, research on institutional democracy and access to justice, and a report which seems to have been on the violent disappearances of certain people. On 4 November 2000 at 9:10 p.m., two strangers threatened the **Association of Peace and Hope**'s guard. After having put a gun to the back of his neck, they warned him that their gun was a silent gun, and they demanded to know where the money that came from abroad was hidden. After having locked him up, they phoned two or

three people who made a vehicle enter the Peace and Hope office's garage. The aggressors took the 6 computers, a scanner, an ink printing machine, a television, and a VCR. While this took place between 9:10 p.m. and 12:30 p.m., the guard was able to hear the following conversation: "Look for the brain" "Which one, the one on the bottom or the one on top?" Apparently they were making allusions to the institution's service network.

It should be noted that, in both cases, the police intervened in an abnormally late manner.



Venezuela

► Serious threats against the trade union movement¹

The Observatory learned, on 15 November 2000, that the National Assembly had approved the organisation of a people's referendum in order to control the current trade union organisations and to dismiss their leaders. This decision was adopted despite criticisms of the illegal and unconstitutional nature of these measures, as expressed in particular by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Venezuelan Workers' Confederation.

At this referendum, which was held on 3 December 2000, the National Electoral Board submitted the following text to the population: "Are you in agreement with the total renewal of the trade union leadership within 180 days, by

ballot, in accordance with the principles of alternance and direct, universal, secret suffrage by virtue of Article 95 of the Constitution, and that the leaders of the trade union central offices, federations and confederations established in this country cease their functions within the same 180 days?".

The referendum turnout was merely 10%, and only 20% of those voting replied yes to the question put to them. This referendum has not been followed up, but trade unions, rendered alert and afraid of the government putting its hand on their activities, have strengthened their management by replacing their president with a management board. In addition to this, from 1 to 10 March 2001, the ILO is organising a support mission to the Venezuelan trade unions to help them organise new elections.

¹ See urgent appeal VEN 001/0011/OBS 114