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ALTO COMISIONADO PARA LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS
OFICINA EN COLOMBIA

UNITED NATIONS

HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE IN COLOMBIA

THE OFFICE IN COLOMBIA OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Condemnation of death threats

Bogotá, May 18, 2005

The Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expresses its concern over reports that during the last four days the Colombian citizens Soraya Gutiérrez, Hollman Morris, Carlos Lozano and Daniel Coronell have received death threats. Ms. Gutiérrez is the president of the Colectivo de Abogados "José Alvear Restrepo" (José Alvear Lawyers' Collective). Mr. Morris is the director of the television program "Contravía". Mr. Lozano is the director of the newspaper "Voz". Mr. Coronell is the director of the television newscast "Noticias Uno" and a columnist for the weekly magazine "Semana". Information gathered by the Office also indicate that *the* Headquarters (in Bogotá) of the Red de Iniciativas por la Paz, (Network of peace initiatives, or Redepaz from its Spanish initials) was recently violently attacked.

In condemning these acts, the Office recalls that the international instruments recognize every person's right to promote and protect human rights, the right to freedom of thought and the right to freedom of expression, and that the Colombian state has committed itself to guaranteeing these rights. The Office draws attention to the fact that the above mentioned death threats and the violent attack demonstrate the particularly vulnerable situation that human rights defenders and many journalists are currently experiencing in Colombia.

The Office notes that the April 2005 Declaration issued by the President of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, after deploring the fact that human rights defenders and journalists continue to be the victims of threats, urges the government "to ensure that protection programs for human rights defenders and other vulnerable groups are comprehensive and effective."

The Office urges the competent authorities to investigate these new events involving threats and violence, bring the perpetrators to justice and punish them in accordance with the *seriousness* of their crimes.

The Office expresses its solidarity with Ms. Soraya Gutiérrez, Mr. Hollman Morris, Mr. Carlos Lozano and Mr. Daniel Coronell, as well as with the members of the Redepaz organization.