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**LATIN AMERICA**

**Sister of ex-Colombia president murdered in kidnapping**

**Cesar Sabogal**  
Bogota, Colombia, April 28, 2006 (AFP) - The sister of former president Cesar Gaviria was killed during a failed kidnap attempt, highlighting political violence in Colombia just one month ahead of presidential elections.

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The body of Liliana Gaviria, 52, was found in an industrial area a few kilometers (miles) from her home near Pereira, 340 kilometers (210 miles) west of Bogota, President Alvaro Uribe said at a public event late Thursday.

Cesar Gaviria, a fierce critic of the conservative president, is the leader of the Liberal Party, the country's main opposition group. He was president from 1994 to 1998 and is a former head of the Organization of American States.

Uribe offered a reward of 430,000 dollars for information leading to capture of those behind the crime, and dispatched the head of the national police and his

defense minister to Pereira.

Gaviria also traveled to Pereira but made no immediate statement.

"The kidnapers appeared to have made a forcible entry when she and a bodyguard, a police officer, resisted," said Pereira mayor German Dario Saldarriaga.

"Four or five persons tried to kidnap her," he said.

A group of armed men snatched the mother of two from her home in the afternoon, killing one of her bodyguards in the process, a police spokesman said.

Local media reported that two would-be kidnapers were also wounded and captured.

In April 1996, Juan Carlos Gaviria, a brother of the former president, was kidnapped by a mysterious rebel group called Dignity for Colombia but was freed after mediation.

Uribe opponents for months have complained of a "dirty war" launched against them ahead of the May 28 presidential elections.

Gaviria has rallied for months against what he said was a lack of protection available for opposition politicians, and called on Uribe to reject support from Colombia's right-wing paramilitary groups.

On Tuesday a Liberal Party city councilman in the southern province of Huila was gunned down in an ambush, the 17th councillor killed in Colombia this year.

On Sunday the lifeless body of historian Jaime Gomez, an adviser to the presidential campaign of Liberal Party candidate Horacio Serpa, was found. He had been kidnapped one month earlier.

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Cesar Gaviria. Archive

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And on Monday Alvaro Leyva, the Conservative Party candidate, denounced a plot to murder him and claimed military intelligence officers were following his steps.

Uribe, a tough-talking conservative who leads his own U Party and is supported by Washington, is far ahead in the polls. In a survey published Wednesday he has 57 percent of popular support, far ahead of Serpa with 18 percent and the leftist Carlos Garvía, with 14 percent.

Uribe needs 50 percent plus one vote to avoid a runoff election in June. AFP

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