

PUBLIC

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UA 29/06 Fear for safety/ "Disappearance"

COLOMBIA **Hersain Talaga Ladios (m)
At least 16 others (names unknown)
Peasant communities in municipalities of Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico and
Vistahermosa**

Hersain Talaga Ladios has not been seen since 27 January, when he was reportedly abducted by army-backed paramilitaries near the hamlet of Puerto Toledo in the municipality of Puerto Rico, Meta department. He may have "disappeared". There are serious concern for the safety of civilians living in the area following the recent abduction and "disappearance" of at least 16 other people.

On 27 January, Hersain Talaga Ladios, his wife and children were travelling by bus from the municipality of Villavicencio, where they live, to their former home in Puerto Toledo. In early January, Hersain Talaga Ladios and his family had fled their homes in Puerto Toledo, along with others living nearby, because of paramilitary activity in the area.

Near Puerto Toledo, the bus was reportedly stopped by paramilitaries at a checkpoint. The paramilitaries forced Hersain Talaga Ladios out of the vehicle, telling his wife, "We are going to hold him to investigate him ... Do not look for him, maybe in five days or more if he doesn't have anything to answer for we will release him, otherwise you know what will happen to him". (*Nos vamos a quedar con él para investigarlo... no lo busquen, de pronto en unos cinco días o más, si no debe nada lo largamos sino ya saben que le pasa*). The paramilitaries then ordered the bus driver to continue on his way. The current whereabouts of Hersain Talaga Ladios are unknown.

The paramilitary checkpoint was located less than 100 metres from an area where troops belonging to the Colombian Army's Second Mobile Brigade were posted. Reports received by Amnesty International indicate that paramilitaries operating in close collusion with the security forces have been responsible for the "disappearance" of 16 people in the municipalities of Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico and Vistahermosa in January 2006. Reports also indicate four people have been victim to extrajudicial executions carried out by paramilitaries operating with the support of members of the *Brigada Móvil No.4* (Mobile Brigade No.4) and *Brigada Móvil No.2* (Mobile Brigade No. 2) of the Colombian Army.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years, Amnesty International has documented numerous human rights violations against civilians in the department of Meta, committed by paramilitaries operating in collusion with the Colombian Army, after paramilitaries accused the civilians of collaborating with guerrilla forces.

Conflict in the area around the municipalities of Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico and Vistahermosa has intensified over the last year as a result of the launch of a large-scale military operation in the area against guerrilla forces, called *Plan Patriota*. The intensification of the conflict has resulted in a massive displacement of peasant communities in the area. Guerrilla forces in the region have also been responsible for killings of civilians they accuse of collaborating with their enemies.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Hersain Talaga Ladios, who was reportedly abducted by paramilitaries near Puerto Toledo on 27 January;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into his "disappearance", with those responsible brought to justice, and calling on the authorities to take all necessary action to locate him and ensure his safety;
- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in the municipalities of Puerto Lleras, Puerto Rico and Vistahermosa in the department of Meta, following paramilitary incursions in the area;
- calling on the authorities to explain the steps they are taking to protect the civilian population in the area;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Meta, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

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

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890

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

Minister of the National Defence

Sr. Camilo Ospina, Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52 OFI. 217

Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN), Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 266 03 51

Salutation: Dear Sir / Estimado Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán, Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

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

Salutation: Dear Dr. Iguarán / Estimado Dr. Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz, Calle 50, No13-19, Oficina 203, Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 March 2006.