

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 40/92 Fear of "Disappearance"/Torture

5 February 1992

COLOMBIA: David ROMERO LIZCANO  
José BLANCO ROJAS

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Amnesty is concerned for the safety of David Romero Lizcano and José Blanco Rojas, who have not been seen since their detention by members of the armed forces on 25 January 1992 close to the town of Tibú, Santander department.

According to the reports of eye-witnesses, David Romero and José Blanco were on their way by motorbike from Tibú to work in another town, Sardinata, when they were stopped by soldiers from the military base at Tibú who took them back to the base under detention. When relatives and friends went to the base later on that day to ask after the men, they were met by a soldier who reportedly said "you've come to ask about the men detained on the bike" "*ustedes vienen a preguntar por los detenidos de la moto*", at which point the official guard appeared and denied that the men were being held at the base.

David Romero and José Blanco's relatives report that they then asked the personero, local ombudsman of Tibú to visit the military base. They report that the detentions were again denied. When the personero ordered a search to be made to verify that the men were not being held, the military authorities reportedly refused, saying that no civilian was permitted to enter the base. Under legislation introduced in January 1990, personeros were specifically granted access to police and military establishments to monitor detainees. There is now serious concern for the safety of David Romero and José Blanco.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

In September 1991 the Procurator General's office produced an official report which stated that more than 3,000 complaints had been lodged against the army and police in the last two years for human rights violations. President César Gaviria Trujillo, on presenting the report, stated:

***"No puede el Gobierno desconocer la gravedad de las acusaciones que se hacen en forma reiterada y masiva contra sus agentes, ni ignorar hasta que punto reina la impunidad por violación de derechos humanos."***

***"The government cannot fail to recognise the seriousness of the accusations made constantly and on a massive scale against its agents, nor ignore the extent of impunity in cases of human rights violations".***

However, despite the government's commitment to uphold respect for human rights, members of the Colombian armed and security forces and paramilitary groups associated with them have continued to commit serious abuses, including torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance", with virtual impunity.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern for the safety of David Romero Lizcano and José Blanco Rojas, who have not been seen since they were detained on 25 January 1992 by soldiers from the Tibú military base and requesting an immediate and thorough investigation into their whereabouts;
- urging that they be released unless charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- urging that whilst in detention they be treated humanely and provided with full access to lawyers and relatives.

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**APPEALS TO**

1) President of the Republic:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /  
 Dear President Gaviria**

**Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066, + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937**

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla  
 Procurador General de la Nación  
 Procuraduría General  
 Edificio Banco Ganadero  
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Procurador General de la Nación /  
 Dear Dr. Arrieta**

**Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472**

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr Jaime Córdoba Triviño  
 Defensor del Pueblo  
 Procuraduría General  
 Edificio Banco Ganadero  
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Estimado Dr Triviño /  
 Dear Dr. Triviño**

**Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, c/o Procuraduria General, Santa Fe de Baogta, Colombia**

**Telexes: 41224 PREGN CO OR 41213 pgndp CO**

**Faxes + 57 1 284 0472**

4) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Ministro /  
 Dear Minister**

**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes: +57 1 222 1874**

5) Commander of Tibú Military Base:

Sr. Comandante

**Sr Comandante /**

Base Militar

Dear Commander

Tibú

Santander, Colombia

**Telegrams: Comandante Base Militar Tibu, Santander, Colombia**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Association for relatives of the "disappeared":

ASFADDES

AA 011446

Santa Fe de Bogotá

Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 March 1992.