

PUBLIC

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16 January 2002

Further information on UA 04/02 (AMR 23/002/2002, 4 January 2002) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA The civilian population of the Catatumbo region, including Luis Alberto Cano (m), aged 18

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of the civilian population of the Catatumbo region as incursions by the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Force of Colombia, continue to take place in various hamlets of El Tarra and Teorama municipalities, Norte de Santander Department.

More than 1,000 people have reportedly been displaced to the town centres of the Convención and El Tarra municipalities. These people are also under threat, as the area around them has been taken over by paramilitary forces.

According to reports, paramilitary bases have been established in Bella Vista, El Paso and Acerrío - villages in the Catatumbo region - abandoned by the civilian population in fear of further paramilitary killings. Paramilitary groups have also reportedly looted abandoned homes and businesses.

Amnesty International is concerned that despite the heavy military presence in the region and despite repeated alerts to the security forces of the paramilitary incursions in the region, no decisive action has been taken to prevent the incursions and paramilitary consolidation of the area.

We have no further information as to the whereabouts of Luis Alberto Cano.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in El Tarra, and Convención, Norte de Santander Department, and the rest of the Catatumbo region after continued paramilitary incursions;
- asking what the government and armed forces will do to protect the civilian population;
- expressing concern that the government and armed forces have failed to protect the civilian population of the department of Norte de Santander and the Catatumbo region and to combat paramilitary groups in the area, despite repeated warnings of impending paramilitary attacks;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Norte de Santander, 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:

Commander of the V Brigade
General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval,
Comandante de la V Brigada
Calle 14, Carrera 33, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Telegram: Comandante de la V Brigada, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia
Fax: + 57 76 455051 / 351493 / 359189 / 334390
Salutation: Dear Commander Carreño Sandoval / Sr. General Carreño Sandoval

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 570 2000
Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

National Advocate for the People

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,
Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 640 0491
Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia
Telex: 44281 PALP CO
Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71
Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization
MINGA
AA 40303,
Santafé de 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 27 February 2002.