

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/10/00

8 March 2000

Further information on UA 16/00 (AMR 23/02/00, 24 January 2000) - Fear for Safety / Possible "Disappearances"

COLOMBIA Ruben BAYENA

Adinael BAYENA

Yamile RIOS

Juan RIOS

and the civilian population of El Tarra, department of Norte de Santander

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Amnesty International is very concerned for the safety of the civilian population of El Tarra, department of Norte de Santander, in the light of the continued failure of the government and armed forces to take steps to protect it in spite of threats by paramilitary forces over the last year to attack this community.

Amnesty International has received reports that a large group of paramilitaries entered the community of Filo Gringo in the municipality of El Tarra on 29 February 2000 and that on 3 March they burned the village to the ground. This happened despite regional authorities and the *V Brigada*, V Brigade of the Colombian Army being warned by state authorities and non-governmental human rights organizations a few days earlier to expect an imminent attack.

All the members of the community of Filo Gringo had fled in advance of the attack and are now reported to be in El Tarra, the municipal capital, and other nearby towns.

The paramilitary group had reportedly camped for a month before the attack in La Guaya, 3 kilometres from a detachment of the Colombian army's Heroes of Saraguro Battalion, *Batallón Héroes de Saraguro*, attached to the V Brigade, without being confronted by the security forces. On 25 February the paramilitaries forced local inhabitants to attend a meeting which again the V Brigade had been warned about yet again took no action.

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have denounced continued paramilitary activity and serious human rights violations in the municipality of El Tarra and neighbouring municipalities, despite the heavy military presence in the region for several months (see UA 34/00, 10 February 2000; EXTRA 150/99, 27 October 1999; UA 219/99, 24 August 1999; UA 172/99, 21 July 1999 and UA 125/99, 2 June 1999). The latest paramilitary attack highlights the continued failure of the authorities to take action to combat paramilitarism and protect civilians in the region despite governmental commitments to take action and repeated United Nations recommendations to the Colombian Government to take such action.

Amnesty International has received no further information on the whereabouts of Ruben BAYENA, Adinael BAYENA, Yamile RIOS and Juan RIOS.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:**

- expressing renewed concern for the safety of the civilian population of the municipality of El Tarra, Norte de Santander department, and urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern at the failure of the government and armed forces to take steps to protect the civilian population of El Tarra and combat paramilitary groups in the area, despite repeated warnings of an impending paramilitary attack;
- asking what measures the government and armed forces are going to take to protect the civilian population of El Tarra;
- continuing to express concern for the safety of peasant farmers Ruben and Adinael Bayena, and Juan and Yamile Ríos, who were abducted by paramilitaries on 19 and 20 January 2000;
- 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:**

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**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 2186 / 337 1351**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana**

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministerio Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5584 / 342 3201 / 341 9739**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

Commander of the 5th Brigade

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval, Comandante de la V Brigada  
Calle 14, Carrera 33, Bucaramanga, Santander, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Comandante, Quinta Brigada, Santander, Colombia.**

**Faxes: + 57 76 455051 / 76 351493**

**Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander**

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña, Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**

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

**Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Alternative Legal Association

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 18 April 2000.