

UA 140/98 Fear for safety / "disappearance" / extrajudicial execution

1 May 1998

COLOMBIA Edgar Durango } "disappeared"  
 Luis Pineda }  
 Ruben Dario Sepulveda }  
 Moisés Quiroz Durán }  
 Miguel Guerra Yánez } extrajudicially executed  
 Henry Rodríguez }

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**and members of 400 families in the El Pinal community**

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There are fears for the safety of 400 displaced families who are occupying El Pinal, a plot of land in the municipality of Bello, in the hills surrounding Medellín, capital of Antioquia Department. The above named community leaders were abducted on 28 April 1998 by paramilitaries, and fears have intensified after the bodies of Miguel Guerra Yánez and Henry Rodríguez were discovered on 29 April.

The families, who were displaced by political violence in the Urubá region of northern Colombia, occupied the land after municipal, state and national authorities provided no alternative shelter. On 11 April members of the police from the *Grupo Especial Contraguerrilla*, Specialist Counter-guerrilla Unit, expelled the families from part of the site. Seven community leaders, possibly including some those named above, were taken to the police headquarters in Bello and accused of being guerrillas. They were later released.

On 28 April municipal authorities ordered the eviction of families who had reoccupied El Pinal. Police officers arrived, enquiring about the names of certain residents and telling all inhabitants that they would be evicted the next day. They were accompanied by several people in civilian clothes.

Ten minutes after the police left the area, 20 men arrived, wearing civilian clothes and carrying weapons only used by the security forces. Some wore balaclavas and had communication radios. They said they had come in the name of Carlos Castaño, leader of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*, Peasant Farmer Self-Defence Forces of Córdoba and Urabá. They accused the community of having links with guerrillas and threatened to kill 40 residents if they did not collaborate with the paramilitaries. They also said they knew the whereabouts of all the leaders of local displaced and human rights activist groups. The paramilitary group then forced the above named men to leave with them, telling the community the visit was a warning from Carlos Castaño. The next day the bodies of Miguel Guerra Yánez and Henry Rodríguez were found in the north of Antioquia.

Although the "disappearances" were denounced to the authorities, police sources have reportedly denied that anything unusual happened, despite the fact that the headquarters of Military Police Battalion No. 4, part of the army's IV Brigade, is situated 700 metres from the El Pinal settlement.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

People who have been forcibly displaced by the long-running civil conflict in Colombia are frequently labelled guerrilla sympathizers by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Many have become victims of serious human rights violations as a result. Members of armed opposition groups have also killed members of forcibly displaced communities whom they consider to be army or paramilitary collaborators.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious human rights abuses with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups

throughout the country. Although the Colombian government has issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband paramilitary, they continue to work with the support of the security forces groups in many areas of the country.

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

- calling for immediate steps to be taken to guarantee the safety of all members of the displaced community living in El Pinal;
- expressing grave concern at the possible extrajudicial execution of Miguel Guerra Yáñez and Henry Rodríguez and the "disappearance" of Edgar Durango, Luis Pineda, Ruben Dario Sepulveda and Moisés Quiroz Durán;
- calling for an immediate, full and impartial investigation into these extrajudicial executions and "disappearances", for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging that if those who have "disappeared" are in detention, they be given access to relatives, lawyers and medical doctors, and that they be charged with a recognizably criminal offence or immediately released;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces, including police units, and paramilitary groups operating in the region and for members of the security forces responsible for supporting such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated governmental commitments.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 286 7434**

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejía

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**

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

Dr. Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia

Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106

Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 574 381 1342**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Organization

Corporación Jurídica Libertad, AA 49027, Medellín, 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 12 June 1998.