

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/26/96

9 May 1996

Further information on UA 74/96 (AMR 23/17/96, 19 March 1996) - Fear for Safety and new concern Possible Extrajudicial Executions

COLOMBIA Peasant farmer families living on the Bellacruz Ranch, department of Cesar

new names: Jaime LAGUNA COLLAZO, peasant farmer leader, teacher  
Edinson DONADO, peasant farmer

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Fears for the safety of peasant farmers forced off their lands on the Bellacruz ranch in the department of Cesar earlier this year (see original UA) have been greatly heightened by the killings of two peasant farmers, Jaime Laguna Collazo and Edinson Donado.

Jaime Laguna was killed by members of a paramilitary group, in circumstances suggesting that he was extrajudicially executed, on 8 May 1996 at 12.30pm as he was travelling towards San Bernardo in the municipality of Pelaya, department of Cesar. Jaime Laguna was a peasant leader who possessed land in the hamlet of Trocadero on the Bellacruz ranch. On 14 February, when a paramilitary group forcibly evicted over 250 peasant farmer families from the ranch, his name appeared on a list the paramilitary group had in their possession. Jaime Laguna also worked as a teacher in the Trocadero school. Following the eviction, he was assigned to the school in Guitarrilla hamlet, municipality of Pelaya.

Edinson Donado was killed on 7 May in the hamlet of San Bernardo, municipality of Pelaya, by a group of armed men. Three of the men reportedly forced their way into his house between 8 and 9pm, made him lie face down and shot him dead. His two-year-old son was injured in the attack. Edinson Donado is thought to have been killed for supporting families evicted from the Bellacruz ranch. In recent weeks it has been reported that paramilitary groups have threatened inhabitants of communities situated around the Bellacruz ranch, warning them not to provide any support to the evicted peasant families.

The killings follow an agreement between the Colombian Government and the evicted families, to the effect that the authorities would guarantee their safe return to the Bellacruz ranch. To date, however, the families have not been able to return. The agreement also included a commitment to dismantle paramilitary groups operating on the ranch. However, no effective measures have yet been taken by the authorities to this end, and recently the paramilitary groups have continued to threaten peasant farmers still living on the Bellacruz ranch. For example, a paramilitary force entered the hamlet of El Lucero - made up of peasant farmers whose rights to the land have been officially recognized - and threatened them, telling them they would have to abandon their lands.

Reportedly 28 arrest warrants have been issued by the *Fiscalía General de la Nación*, Office of the Attorney-General, against paramilitary leaders operating in the Bellacruz ranch. Yet, to date, the authorities have reportedly made no attempt to carry out arrests.

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

- expressing deep concern at the killings of Edinson Donado and Jaime Laguna Collazos on 7 and 8 May 1996;

- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of peasant farmer families forcibly evicted from land on the Bellacruz ranch, department of Cesar, and those who have been supporting them;
- calling for a full and impartial investigations into the two killings and continued threats against peasant farmers, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the government to immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of the armed forces or with armed forces' complicity. Members of such forces responsible for human rights violations should be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

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

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

2) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento  
 Fiscal General de la Nación  
 Fiscalía General de la Nación  
 Apartado Aéreo 29855  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939 or 288 2828**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso**

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
 Ministro del Interior  
 Ministerio del Interior  
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7  
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 6524/ 286 0053/ 286 0485**

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

4) Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Carlos Esguerra Portocarrero  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa , Bogota, 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 4 July 1996.