

6 May 1998

Further information on UA 383/97 (AMR 23/83/97, 4 December 1997) and follow-up (AMR 23/04/98, 20 January 1998) - Extrajudicial executions / Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Carlos Enrique Maso Vargas, aged 22, murdered
Jhon Fredy Vargas (brother of above)
Alvaro Gaviria
and other members of the displaced community of La
Balsita

On 12 April 1998 the body of Carlos Enrique Maso Vargas was found murdered.

Fears for the safety of other members of the displaced community of La Balsita, who have taken refuge in Dabeiba, amid repeated death threats from local paramilitary forces, are now heightened.

On 11 April Carlos Enrique Maso Vargas was abducted by paramilitary gunmen who dragged him from a bus, loudly accusing him of being a guerrilla (member of the armed opposition). They informed his brother, Jhon Fredy Vargas, with whom he was travelling that they would not take him as well because his five-year-old son was with him. The bus had just departed Dabeiba.

There are also fears for the safety of Alvaro Gaviria, also a displaced person residing in Dabeiba, who was recently threatened by paramilitary gunmen and accused of being a guerrilla. Those accused of being guerrilla sympathizers or auxiliaries are often the victim of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions.

In the last 15 days paramilitary forces which control check points into Dabeiba have reportedly limited the quantity of food entering the town and have made threats to local residents.

Reports confirm that, in spite of repeated denunciations to the authorities by local people, paramilitary forces continue to operate with total freedom in the vicinity. Paramilitary groups also operate openly in the presence of civil, police and military authorities. Known members of paramilitary groups have been seen conversing with members of the government-licensed rural vigilante associations, formerly known as CONVIVIR, which were established to provide local intelligence information to the security services but, in reality, works in collaboration with paramilitary groups.

Over the past year thousands of peasant farmers from various communities in the Urabá region have fled their homes as a result of paramilitary offensives.

Others have fled as a result of threats from guerilla forces against those they consider to be army or paramilitary collaborators. The community of La Balsita fled their homes to seek refuge in Dabeiba after paramilitary groups killed several community members in November 1997.

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

- expressing concern for the physical safety of Jhon Fredy Vargas and Alvaro Gaviria and other members of the displaced community of la Balsita who have sought refuge in the municipal capital of Dabeiba;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriated by the community to guarantee their safety;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the abduction and killing of Carlos Enrique Maso Vargas, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government 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

E-mail: esamper@presidencia.gov.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 de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Governor of Antioquia

Sr. Alberto Builes Ortega
 Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia
 Gobernación de Antioquia
 Calle 42B, # 52-106
 Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Telegrams: Gobernador del Departamento, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 4 381 1342

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Presidential Adviser for the Displaced

Dr. Víctor Manuel García
 Consejero Presidencial para la Atención de los Desplazados por la Violencia,
 Calle 7, No 6-54
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Consejero Presidencial para los Desplazados, Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Consejero / Dear Sir

COPIES TO:Human Rights Organization:

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, 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 17 June 1998.