

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/043/2002

23 April 2002

Further information on UA 98/02 (AMR 23/034/02, 2 April 2002) - Fear for Safety/Abduction

COLOMBIA Ofidia Sánchez (f)

Eulises Trejo (m)

Population of San José de Apartadó

Killed: Reynel de Jesús Alvarez (m)

Osiel Montoya (m)

Gonzalo Trejo (m)

Paramilitary gunmen have reportedly set up a blockade to prevent access to the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. All buses and goods vehicles have been prevented from entering or leaving the community since 10 April, and three bus drivers have been killed.

The Peace Community is halfway up a mountain, linked by road to the town of Apartadó. Goods and passengers are usually carried between the town and the Peace Community by public buses.

On 30 March paramilitary gunmen held up a bus and abducted Gilma Rosa and Ofidia Sánchez. Ofidia Sánchez is now known to have escaped later that day. The driver of the bus, Reynel de Jesús Alvarez, was killed on 9 April, in an area known as "Tierra Amarilla", a few minutes' drive from Apartadó.

The next day, seven men believed to be members of an army-backed paramilitary group reportedly stopped a public bus at 6pm and warned the driver that "if they continued delivering food, whether accompanied by police or the army, they would be killed" ("*si siguen subiendo alimentos, así sea acompañado por policías y militares, los matamos*")

Another driver, Osiel Montoya, was reportedly shot dead in Tierra Amarilla two days after this warning, as he was driving a bus from Apartadó to the Peace Community. Gunmen killed a third driver working the route, Gonzalo Trejo, in his home.

Since these killings, the community have not been able to hire vehicles to bring their crop of bananas to the market in Apartadó. The harvest is reportedly beginning to spoil and people are going hungry.

Health workers have reportedly been unable to reach the Peace Community, and sick people have to be brought down to Apartadó on mules.

The whereabouts of Eulises Trejo, who was abducted on 30 March, remain unknown.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of people living in the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, which has been blockaded by paramilitary gunmen since 10 April, and calling on the authorities to ensure that people providing humanitarian assistance are given protection to ensure that they have access to the community immediately;

- calling on the authorities to take immediate action to end the blockade of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and order a full and impartial investigation, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging them to investigate the killings of Reynel de Jesus Alvarez, Osiel Montoya and Gonzalo Trejo, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Antioquia, with the results made public and those members of the security forces responsible for supporting and operating in unison with paramilitaries to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups in the municipality of Apartadó and the whole of Antioquia, in line with government commitments and repeated recommendations made by the United Nations.

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

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

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

Commander of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian Army

Comandante XVII Brigada del Ejército Nacional
General Pablo Rodríguez Laverde
Carepa, Urabá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Comandante, XVII Brigada Ejército, Carepa, Antioquia, COLOMBIA

Fax: +57 4 823 6844 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Commander Rodríguez / Sr. Comandante Rodríguez

COPIES TO:Non-governmental human rights organization

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz
AA 31861, 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 June 2002.