

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/045/2005

20 December 2005

Further Information on UA 312/05 (AMR 23/042/2005, 12 December 2005) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Population of Curumaní municipality, Cesar Department

New names: Members of the non-governmental human rights organization Minga

The human rights organization Minga has launched a campaigning initiative on behalf of the community of Curumaní, Cesar Department, where at least 22 peasant farmers were killed by paramilitary gunmen on 4 and 5 December 2005, and the leader of an army-backed paramilitary group has responded by labelling the human rights group a "guerrilla organization". This amounts to a death threat, as others labelled this way have often been killed by the army or paramilitaries.

At least 22 peasant farmers were reportedly killed in the municipality of Curumaní on 4 and 5 December, by paramilitary gunmen. Minga (the *Asociación para la Promoción Social Alternativa*, Association for the Promotion of Social Alternatives), publicised the killings and began a campaign to pressure the authorities to protect the community and to investigate the killings.

On 12 December paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, known as "Jorge Cuarenta", one of the commanders of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, in negotiations with the government to arrange their demobilisation, accused Minga through a radio message broadcast by the nationwide Radio Caracol station and subsequently reproduced by some Colombian newspapers of "creating a scandal" and of being a part of the left-wing guerrilla group *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army.

The Attorney General's office has reportedly begun an investigation into the massacre.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Minga is a national human rights organization based in the capital, Bogotá, which has campaigned against human rights violations committed by the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

In the past Minga workers have faced death threats after the organization approached the Colombian authorities and national media to draw attention to human rights violations. Colombian human rights defenders have frequently been killed by paramilitaries or the security forces after being accused of being guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators.

The present government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez has been engaged in a process of dialogue with army-backed paramilitary groups. The main paramilitary umbrella organization, the AUC, declared a ceasefire in December 2002, but since then over 2,300 people have "disappeared" or been killed

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

- expressing concern for the safety of members of the human rights organization Minga and urging the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by Minga themselves, to ensure that they can carry out their legitimate and important work for the defence of human rights in safety;

- reminding the authorities that their obligations to human rights defenders are laid out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas resolutions and in repeated recommendations made to them by the UN;
- asking the authorities what action they have taken to protect the civilian population of Curumaní in the wake of the paramilitary massacre of 4 and 5 December.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe/ Dear President Uribe

High Commissioner for Peace

Alto Comisionado Para la Paz

Dr. Luis Carlos Restrepo

Casa de Nariño - Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 560 9946

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Restrepo/ Dear Dr. Restrepo

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Iguarán / Estimado Dr. Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

MINGA

Calle 19 # 5-88, oficina 1203

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 31 January 2006.