

UA 251/96 Apparent extrajudicial executions /  
"Disappearances" / Fear for safety

1 November 1996

COLOMBIA Killed: Jesús Salvador CARDOZO PUENTES, tradesman, 28  
 Jorge Eliécer CARDOZO PUENTES, farmer, 38  
 Aurelio LINDARTE PRADO, 35  
 Jaider Uriel CARDENAS ARDILA, 8  
 Alirio QUINTERO TRILLO, tradesman, 35  
 Huber Antonio ASCANIO ABRIL, 26  
 Neemías DURAN PÉREZ, 26

"Disappeared: Giovanni GARCÍA

Mari Elsy SALGADO (f)  
 Suli LEAL SALGADO, 13  
 Gerardo ARÉVALO  
 Noel DURAN PÉREZ  
 Nohemí DURAN (f)  
 Olfen QUINTANA SÁNCHEZ

and one unidentified person

At midnight on 26 October 1996 a group of 60 heavily armed men wearing army-issue uniforms are reported to have entered the community of Media Luna, municipality of San Diego, in the department of Cesar. By the time the group left at 3.30am, they had killed six people and abducted seven others, one of whom, Neemías Duran Pérez, has since been found dead. The other six are still missing, as are two other inhabitants of Media Luna, Mari Elsy Salgado and her daughter Suli Leal Salgado, who were abducted by paramilitaries in Valledupar, the capital of Cesar, on the same night.

The paramilitaries told inhabitants of Media Luna that they had a "death list" of 200 people who they were going to kill in the same or a worse way as their other victims. They also stated that they would kill relatives of guerrillas and guerrilla collaborators. They reportedly destroyed the telephone exchange, leaving the community incommunicado, and left graffiti identifying themselves as members of the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá* (ACCU), Peasant Farmer Self-Defence of Córdoba and Urabá. The tortured body of Neemías Durán Pérez was found on 29 October near Media Luna. He had been castrated, his eyes gouged out, and his fingernails had been torn off.

Amnesty International fears for the safety of the eight people who remain "disappeared" and of the other inhabitants of Media Luna. The raid follows recent attacks by the same paramilitary group in the department of Cesar (see UA 230/96, 1 October 1996, AMR 23/49/96). Paramilitary groups operating with the support of the security forces often draw up "death lists" of those they consider to be guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators. Peasant farmers, community leaders, popular activists and human rights workers are frequently labelled as subversives and often subsequently become the victims of serious human rights violations.

The Colombian press has reported that the Governor of Cesar has condemned paramilitary actions in the department, stating that a commission had been set up a month ago, made up of the security forces, the Office of the Procurator-General and the Office of the Attorney-General, to confront such activities. Although the Governor reportedly promised effective action against paramilitary groups, the latest raid clearly indicates that the authorities are failing in this commitment.

Paramilitary groups continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of Colombia, despite government pledges to protect human rights and dismantle such groups. Members of the security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity.

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

- calling for immediate steps to ensure the safety of the population of Media Luna, municipality of San Diego, department of Cesar, after the apparent extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" of several inhabitants on 26/27 October by members of a paramilitary group;
- calling for a full and impartial investigations into the killings and "disappearances", and the reported "death list", for the results to be made public and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate steps to establish the whereabouts of the "disappeared", and that if in detention, they be treated humanely, and granted access to medical doctors, lawyers and relatives;
- calling for the immediate dismantling of paramilitary forces, in line with governmental commitments, and for those responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

**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**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

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

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

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento  
 Fiscal General de la Nación  
 Fiscalía General de la Nación  
 Calle 35 No. 4-31  
 Apartado Aéreo 29855  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

**Faxes:+ 57 1 288 2828**

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

Governor of the department of Cesar

Sr. Mauricio Pimiento Barrera  
 Gobernador del departamento del Cesar  
 Gobernación del Cesar  
 Calle 16, No. 12-120  
 Valledupar, Cesar, Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador del Cesar, Valledupar, Colombia**

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

In appeals to the Governor, acknowledge his public commitment to decisive action against paramilitary activity in the region. While acknowledging that guerrilla forces in Colombia have violated international humanitarian law, underline that such abuses can in no way justify human rights violations by the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies.

**COPIES TO:**

Alternative Legal Association  
MINGA, AA 40303, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

**You may also write to your own government, urging it to use its good offices to urge the Colombian authorities to ensure the safety of Media Luna inhabitants, to take immediate action against the paramilitary groups, and to bring human rights violators to justice. Emphasise that the paramilitary group which carried out the Media Luna attack has been involved in other violations in the region in recent weeks, showing that the authorities have failed to take effective action. Governments should be urged to monitor closely the efforts made by the Colombian authorities.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 December 1996.