

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/58/98

7 August 1998

Further information on UA 176/98 (AMR 23/38/98, 12 June 1998) and follow-up (AMR 23/49/98, 1 July 1998) - Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial executions

COLOMBIA6000 displaced civilians in Barrancabermeja, Santander Department

On 5 August 1998 a paramilitary group publicly and repeatedly threatened to attack a community of displaced peasant farmer families in the town where they have sought refuge if they do not leave within days.

Following paramilitary incursions in their home region, over 6000 displaced people from the municipalities of Simití, San Pablo and Santa Rosa del Sur in Bolívar Department have in recent weeks travelled up the Magdalena river to Barrancabermeja in search of shelter and safety.

The paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Santander y del Sur de Cesar* (AUSAC), United Self-Defence Forces of Santander and South Cesar, which abducted and killed of at least 30 Barrancabermeja residents on 16 May (see UA 156/98, AMR 23/34/98, 19 May 1998), issued public statements to the local media on 5 August, ordering the displaced community to stop all protests and to leave the town within two days. Otherwise another paramilitary attack would take place, similar to the one on 16 May.

The situation is extremely tense in Barrancabermeja due to the influx of displaced people and widespread reports that the AUSAC were also responsible for killing and wounding at least 10 people in different parts of Barrancabermeja on 2 August

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the displaced people temporarily living in Barrancabermeja;
- calling for the authorities to undertake all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves to guarantee their safety;
- urging that the all threats against the displaced community be fully and impartially investigated and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in both Bolívar and Santander departments and urging that those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments;
- acknowledging that guerrilla forces in Colombia have violated international humanitarian law but emphasising that such abuses can in no way justify human rights violations by the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies;
- reminding Colombia's new government of the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Dr. 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 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/**

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

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Fax:+ 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405**

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, 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 Santander Department

Sr. Miguel de Jesús Arenas Prada, Gobernador del Departamento de Santander  
Gobernación de Santander, Calle 37, No. 10-30, Bucaramanga, Colombia

**Faxes: 5776 339889**

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

**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 18 September 1998.

***"Everyone has the right to life, liberty  
and security of person."***