

UA 292/94 Possible Extrajudicial Executions / Fear for Safety 9 August 1994

COLOMBIA	José del CARMEN RUIZ, aged 28) workers with
William RARURO, aged 30) Palmas del Cesar	
	José BUITRAGO ZABALA, aged 38) company; residents
	Manuel FIGUEROA, aged 50) of Minas village,
	Alcides PAEZ TARAZONA, aged 30) San Martín
	Rodrigo CARMONA CAMAO, aged 25)
	Adriano PORTILLO, aged 70) residents of
	Javier CONTRERAS BARON, aged 20) Norean village,
Alvaro BOTELLO, aged 25) Aguachica	

Amidst reports of paramilitary activity in the heavily militarized municipalities of San Martín and Aguachica, department of Cesar, the villagers named above are alleged to have been extrajudicially executed at the end of July 1994. Amnesty International fears for the safety of other civilians in the area, and is concerned that if the new President of Colombia fails to fulfil his pledge to disband such paramilitary forces, the latter will continue to carry out killings and other human rights violations against the civilian population.

On 31 July, a group of armed men in civilian clothing arrived in the village of Minas, municipality of San Martín. They reportedly forced the inhabitants to assemble, selected the six men named above and killed them in front of the crowd.

Reports indicate that two days earlier, on 29 July, a group of about 20 armed men, some hooded, entered the village of Norean in the municipality of Aguachica.

The men, some in military clothing, others in plainclothes, were apparently members of a paramilitary group, identifying themselves by saying: *"We are not from the DAS [Civilian Security Department], nor from the UNASE [Anti-kidnapping and Extortion Unit], nor from any law enforcement agency, we are a group of orphans of the guerrilla" ("No somos del DAS, ni del UNASE, ni de ninguna clase de ley, somos un grupo de huérfanos de la guerrilla")*.

The armed men forced the villagers to assemble, then fired shots into the air and stole watches, money and jewellery. Adriano Portillo was killed when the armed men broke down the door to his house and shot him several times, reportedly for failing to assemble with the other villagers quickly enough. Once the villagers were assembled Javier Contreras Barón and Alvaro Botello were taken aside and shot in front of the crowd. The armed men threatened the villagers if they denounced the killings.

At the time, a military checkpoint and a provisional post of the *Brigada Móvil No.2* - Mobile Brigade No.2 - were reportedly located not far from Norean, and minutes after the killings an army tank circulated through the village. These factors, and the fact that paramilitary forces operate freely in the region despite it being a heavily militarized area, continue to point to collusion between such forces and the Colombian military.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including torture, arbitrary arrest, "disappearance" and

extrajudicial execution. Former President César Gaviria Trujillo repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Many paramilitary forces have been set up and trained by the armed forces, and continue to play a central role in the Colombian army's counter-insurgency strategy. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, made several promises, both during his election campaign and subsequently, to improve the human rights situation. His promises include a commitment to dismantle the paramilitary forces.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of members of the communities of Norean and Minas in the department of Cesar on 29 July and 31 July 1994 respectively apparently by members of paramilitary forces;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that the government take all possible measures to protect the lives of the civilian population in the municipalities of San Martín and Aguachica;
- urging that immediate steps are taken to dismantle any paramilitary forces operating in the region, and to investigate possible collusion between such forces and the Colombian armed forces.

APPEALS TO

1. President of Colombia:

Señor Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño, Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2. Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero Zea, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3. Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro de Gobierno
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Carrera 8A, No.8-09, Piso 7⁰
 Santafé de Bogotá DE, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4. Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero

Carrera 5, No. 15-80, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Velásquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 342 9723

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Velásquez

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:Human Rights Organization

Calle 19, No. 4-88, Of 14-02, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño

Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 35, No. 7-25, P. 5, 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 20 September 1994.