

COLOMBIA Civilian population of the municipality of Majagual, department of Sucre.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of about 200 families living in the community of Tomala in the municipality of Majagual as well as those in neighbouring municipalities in the department of Sucre in northern Colombia. In the last few days, army-backed paramilitaries operating in the area have reportedly killed at least five peasant farmers in Tomala, threatened to kill more civilians and burned six houses.

Around 300 paramilitaries have reportedly been patrolling the region encompassing Majagual and the neighbouring communities of Ovejas, Chalán, San Onofre, Morroa and Magangué, all situated in the department of Sucre.

According to unconfirmed reports the paramilitaries are made up of members of the Colombian Army who at times patrol and identify themselves as such and at other times change uniforms and identify themselves as paramilitaries.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peasant communities have often suffered human rights violations during the course of Colombia's long-running civil war. In the past five years paramilitary groups have killed several thousand civilians.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Neither the armed forces and their paramilitary allies, nor the left-wing armed opposition groups, recognize the neutrality of the civilian population.

The Colombian Government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989, yet they continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population of the municipality of Majagual and neighboring municipalities in the department of Sucre, where army-backed paramilitaries are threatening to kill civilians;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of inhabitants;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the reports of the recent killing of at least five peasant farmers in the community of Tomala, Majagual municipality, and for the results to be made public;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the municipality of Majagual and neighbouring municipalities in the department of Sucre and urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments.

APPEALS TO (fax numbers are easier to obtain during office hours local time - 5 GMT):

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
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 2186 / 337 1351
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Diagonal 22B 5201, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 570 2022 (a recorded message will play before putting you through to a ringing tone for the fax machine)
Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr. Gómez

Commander of the Army

General Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel, Comandante del Ejército Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Comandante del Ejercito, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 43401 COEJC
Faxes: + 57 1 315 1570
Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander

COPIES TO:

People's Ombudsman:

Dr. José Fernando Castro Caycedo
Defensor del Pueblo
Defensoría del Pueblo
Calle 55 No. 10-32
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Castro, Defensoria del Pueblo, Bogota, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 346 1225 / 285 6908
Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

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 November 1999.