

UA 366/94 Fear for Safety / Possible Extrajudicial Execution 5 October 1994

COLOMBIA

Antonio NAVARRO

"Ludy" (f)

and the civilian population of communities of Limonal, El Páramo and
Tierra Azul, department of Norte de Santander

Fears that a recent resurgence in paramilitary activity in Norte de Santander, together with large-scale military operations in the region, will put the civilian population at risk, have been heightened by the apparent extrajudicial execution of Antonio Navarro on 1 October 1994. Amnesty International fears that more civilians will be killed unless the authorities take immediate steps to bring the perpetrators to justice and dismantle the paramilitary groups.

The villagers of Limonal, El Páramo and Tierra Azul have been subjected to harassment since 1 October, when military operations began there. On that day, a group of 12 heavily armed men in civilian clothes reportedly arrived in the village of Limonal, municipality of El Carmen, looking for several villagers named on a list in their possession. They only found Antonio Navarro, whom they accused of being a guerrilla collaborator. They tortured him and then shot him to death. Reports indicate that the paramilitary group was working with an army patrol which arrived in Limonal minutes after the killing and made no effort to pursue the paramilitaries.

The latter then went to the nearby village of El Páramo. They forced their way into the house of a woman called Ludy who they also accused of being a guerrilla collaborator, but she managed to evade capture. It is feared that she is particularly at risk, as is anyone else named on the army's list, given that in the past civilians accused of collaboration with the guerrillas have later been killed by paramilitary groups or the armed forces.

Shortly after the killing of Antonio Navarro a confrontation between the guerrilla forces and a combined force of the army and the paramilitary group took place in the region, reportedly resulting in the deaths of three soldiers.

Paramilitary groups operating in alliance with the armed forces have been responsible for a number of extrajudicial executions of civic, peasant farmer and trade union leaders in the region in recent months and have threatened many civilians.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including torture, arbitrary arrest, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on the 7 August 1994, made several promises, both during his election campaign and subsequently, to improve the human rights situation. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights abuses with virtual impunity. Civilians, including community leaders, political activists and trade unionists have frequently been the victim of such human rights violations. 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 counterinsurgency strategy which is characterized by the systematic violation of human rights. President Samper's promises include a commitment to eradicate paramilitary

forces and stamp out the impunity which benefits members of the security and paramilitary forces responsible for human rights violations.

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 Antonio Navarro on the 1 October 1994 in circumstances suggesting an extrajudicial execution;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are undertaken into this killing, that the results be made public and those responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of Ludy (no surname) and the civilian population of the villages of Limonal, El Páramo and Tierra Azul department of Norte de Santander;
- urging that the government of President Ernesto Samper take immediate steps to dismantle paramilitary forces in the region and elsewhere, in line with stated policy and investigate possible links between such forces and the Colombian security forces;
- urging that members of paramilitary forces responsible for human rights violations be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

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 7939/284 7186

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

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 1874/222 2445

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro de Gobierno
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Carrera 8A, No.8-09, Piso 7^o
 Santafé de Bogotá DE, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 281 5884

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

MINGA

Calle 19 No. 4-88

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 16 November 1994.