

PUBLIC

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Possible "Disappearances"/ Fear
for Safety

30 September 1998

COLOMBIA Juan Carlos GARZÓN PÉREZ, 22 years old
Juan Guillermo GUARÍN, 21 years old.

Juan Carlos Garzón and Juan Guillermo Guarín have not been seen since they were reportedly forcibly abducted by members of a paramilitary group as they travelled to El Peñol, department of Antioquia. Amnesty International fears for their safety

According to information just received, on 6 September 1998, Juan Carlos Garzón and Juan Guillermo Guarín were returning from a football match by bus to the municipality of El Peñol, with other members of their football team and their relatives. At approximately 5:45pm the bus was forced to stop by a group of 20 heavily-armed men in an area known as La Vuelta del Tabor.

The armed men, believed to be members of a paramilitary organization, forced the passengers off the bus and demanded to see their identity documents. At this point they bound Juan Carlos Garzón and Juan Guillermo and took them away. Despite attempts to trace them, their whereabouts remain unknown.

It is reported that shortly before their "disappearance", the two men had been accused of being guerrillas or guerrilla collaborators by members of the El Peñol police. Those accused of being guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators by the security forces and their paramilitary allies are frequently the victims of serious human rights violations.

The "disappearance" of the two men has raised fears for the safety of other young members of the civilian population in the municipality of El Peñol who have also reportedly been accused of being guerrilla collaborators by the police.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. The Colombian Government suspended the 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 operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country. No effective steps have, as yet, been taken by the authorities to control their actions and to hold members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations. The Attorney General recently stated that more than 200 outstanding arrest warrants issued against alleged paramilitary members responsible for widespread human rights violations have still not been acted upon by the security forces. Colombia's new President, Andrés Pastrana, took office on 8 August 1998. So far, he and his government have not taken any effective steps to tackle the country's long running human rights crisis.

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

-expressing concern at the "disappearance", reportedly by paramilitaries, of Juan Carlos Garzón and Juan Guillermo Guarín on 6 September 1998 in an area known as La Vuelta del Tabor, and expressing concern for the safety of other members of the civilian population in the municipality of El Peñol and neighbouring municipalities;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the "disappearance" of the two men, that the results be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area 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;
- 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 Andres Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Tx: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Director General of the Police

Brigadier Rosso José Serrano Cadena
Director General de la Policía Nacional
Tr. 45, No. 40-11
Santafé de Bogotá
Colombia

Telegrams: Dir.-Gen. Policia Nacional, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 269 58 58/315 0249

Salutation: Sr. Director General/Dear sir

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2017

Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.

COPIES TO:

Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared",

Señores,
ASFADDES
AA 011446
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 11 November 1998.

**"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."
Article 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>