

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 164/99

Fear for Safety / Possible "Disappearance"

19 November

COLOMBIA Israel VITONÁS NOSCUE, leader of an indigenous reserve

Amnesty International is very concerned for the safety of Israel Vitonás Noscue who, it has just learned, was forcibly abducted on 30 October 1999, and who is still missing.

According to witnesses, four heavily armed men identifying themselves as belonging to the *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad*, (DAS), Civilian Intelligence Department, an official state security agency, forced him out of his car and into a waiting vehicle before driving off in the direction of the neighbouring community of Palo.

Israel Vitonás Noscue is a leader of the indigenous reserve (*resguardo*) of Tacueyó, in the department of Cauca, South West Colombia. The abduction took place as he was driving through the Pajarita area in the municipality of Caloto.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peasant communities in disputed zones in Colombia's long running armed conflict, including black and indigenous communities, have frequently come under attack. The civilian population's neutrality is not recognized by the parties in the conflict. Those who campaign for the socio-economic rights of communities are frequently labelled guerrilla sympathizers and thus presented as legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war. Armed opposition groups have also been responsible for arbitrary killings of members of the civilian population including members of indigenous communities.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of indigenous leader Israel Vitonás Noscue who is believed to have been forcibly abducted on 30 October 1999 in the municipality of Caloto, department of Cauca, by armed men identifying themselves as belonging to the DAS;
- expressing concern for the safety of other indigenous leaders in the department of Cauca;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by the those at risk to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate and comprehensive investigation into the "disappearance" of Israel Vitonás Noscue, in order to establish his whereabouts and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging that the results of the investigation be made public;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and UN recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

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, Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 570 2022 (if voice answers, say "Fax, por favor" and wait for the signal - a recorded message asking you to wait may be heard first).

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

Governor of the Department of Cauca

Señor César Negret Mosquera
Gobernador del Departamento del Cauca
Gobernación del Cauca
Carrera 7, Calle 4^a, esquina
Popayán, Cauca
Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 28 243 597

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Negret / Dear Mr. Negret

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 17 December 1999.