

PUBLIC

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6 December 1999

Further information on EXTRA 169/99 (AMR 23/88/99, 29 November 1999) - Possible "disappearance"/Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA

Edgar QUIROGA
Gildardo FUENTES

On 4 December the paramilitary organization *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, reportedly told a commission set up to investigate the abduction of Edgar Quiroga and Gildardo Fuentes that it was holding the men.

The commission was set up on 30 November, two days after the men were abducted, with representatives from Colombian non-governmental human rights organizations, the United Nations Office of Human Rights in Bogotá, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, the office of the Vice-President and other government offices. The commission sent one group of investigators to interview witnesses in the municipality of San Pablo, department of Bolívar, where the men were abducted, and another to the municipality of Simití, department of Bolívar, where the AUC are thought to have taken the two men.

The investigators who travelled to Cerro Azul found that the two men were abducted by the AUC. According to the Commission's report, the AUC entered the community of Cerro Azul on 27 September and forced the people to assemble, saying they would kill only guerrilla militia members.

The following day a further group of paramilitaries arrived in Cerro Azul. According to the Commission's report they claimed that they had been sent after the AUC had asked the *V Brigada*, Fifth Brigade of the Colombian Army, for reinforcements.

According to the Commission's findings, Edgar Quiroga and Gildardo Fuentes arrived in Cerro Azul before midday on 28 November, and were detained by the AUC. Towards 4pm the two men, with their hands and legs bound, were kicked and beaten with rifle butts and forced onto a white helicopter with red and green stripes on its tail. The paramilitaries told the local inhabitants that they were taking Edgar Quiroga to the community of San Blas, municipality of Simití, where paramilitary chiefs wanted to talk to him. They said they were going to kill Gildardo Fuentes immediately because he had escaped a previous attempt to kill him in October 1999 (see original UA).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of peasant farmer leaders Gildardo Fuentes and Edgar Quiroga, who were abducted on 28 November 1999 in the municipality of San Pablo and are now believed to be in the hands of AUC paramilitary forces;
- calling on the authorities to open an immediate and comprehensive investigation into their abduction and bring to justice those responsible;
- urging that the results of the investigation be made public;
- urging that all measures are taken to guarantee their prompt and safe release;
- expressing concern for the safety of other leaders of peasant farming communities in the department of Bolívar;
- asking the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Bolívar, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- asking 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

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministerio Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5584 / 342 3201 / 341 9739

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Commander of the V Brigade

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
Comandante de la V Brigada
Carrera 33-14, Barrio Los Pinos
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 7 645 5051/635 1493

Salutation: Sr. General / Dear General

COPIES TO:Alternative Legal Association

MINGA, AA 40303, 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 3 January 2000.