

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 45/94 Possible extra-judicial executions
 /fear for safety

11 February 1994

VENEZUELA Felipe Ramón ROMERO, 25)
Vicente ROMERO, 25)
Carmen ROMERO, 48)
Francisco ROMERO) Yucpa Indians
Nirida ROMERO, 12)

Idelfonso García, land rights activist

Amnesty International has received reports about the killings of Felipe Romero, Vicente Romero and Carmen Romero, all members of the Yucpa Indigenous community of Kasmera, Perijá Hills, state of Zulia, by members of the Venezuelan army on 2 February 1994, in circumstances suggesting their possible extra-judicial execution. Reports also indicate that Francisco Romero and Nirida Romero were seriously wounded in the incident.

Amnesty International fears for the physical safety of witnesses to these killings.

According to reports, on 2 February at least twenty members of the *Grupo de Tareas 1.2*, Task Force 1.2, of the Venezuelan army entered the indigenous village of Kasmera, near the border with Colombia and proceeded to confiscate a batch of wood gathered by the Yucpa community. Witnesses' accounts indicate that an argument ensued and the army reportedly opened fired against the crowd, killing Vicente and Francisco Romero and injuring Carmen, Francisco and Nirida Romero. Carmen Romero later died in hospital. On 7 February, the Defense Minister, General Rafael Montero Revette justified the action arguing it had been in self-defense since the Yucpas had been armed with machetes. The governor of Zulia, Lola Aniyar de Castro, said in a newspaper interview that one of the bodies had bullet wounds to the back and called for an investigation.

In July 1993, 33 peasants accused of belonging to the Colombian guerrilla were arrested in the Perijá Hills area by members of the Task Force 1.2 and allegedly ill-treated. The Venezuelan Peasant Federation (*Federación Campesina de Venezuela*) claims that two of them, José Luis García and Idelfonso Carmona were tortured while in detention. Idelfonso Carmona, a land rights activist, appeared in a television interview denouncing the house raids, torture and ill-treatment of peasants in this area by the Task Force 1.2. Following his public declarations, Idelfonso Carmona claimed to have been harassed and threatened with death by members of the army. Idelfonso Carmona was killed on 26 November 1993 by a masked man who shot him in the face.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received an increasing number of reports of human rights abuses against members of indigenous and peasant communities along the Venezuelan-Colombian border. Alleged incursions by members of the Colombian guerrillas into Venezuelan territory has led to an increased militarization of the area. This has led to an escalation of human rights violations against members of local indigenous communities.

In one such incident in October 1992, two Wayúu Indians were arbitrarily killed by the security forces during a visit of the then president Carlos Andrés Pérez to Paraguaipoa, in the state of Zulia, when the truck they were driving accidentally crashed near the presidential convoy. No one has been brought

to justice for these killings.

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

- expressing extreme concern at the killing of Felipe Romero, Vicente Romero and Carmen Romero and at the wounding of Francisco Romero and Nirida Romero, members of the Yucpa indigenous community of Kasmera, on 2 February 1994 in circumstances suggesting their possible extra-judicial execution;
- expressing deep concern at the killing of Idelfonso Carmona on 26 November 1993 following his public denunciation of the abuses suffered by his community in July 1993; expressing concern that reports of threats against his life were not properly investigated;
- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into all these killings in accordance with the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging that the physical integrity of any witnesses to the killings be safeguarded and that any threats be properly investigated.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic

Sr. Rafael Caldera
President of the Republic of Venezuela
Palacio de Miraflores
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: President Velásquez, Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 26429 EXTER VC

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Mr. President

2) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Ramón Escovar Salom
Ministro de Relaciones Interiores
Ministerio de Relaciones Interiores
Carmelitas a Santa Capilla
Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Caracas, Venezuela

Telexes: 26429 EXTER VC

Faxes: +58 2 81 57 96

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Defence

General Rafael Montero Revette
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Fuerte Tiuna, Conejo Blanco,
El Valle, Caracas, Venezuela

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Caracas, Venezuela

Faxes: +58 2 66 28 829

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Human Rights organization

Sres.

PROVEA

Apartado 5156

Caracas 1010-A, VENEZUELA

2. Daily Newspaper

El Globo

Avda Principal de Maripérez

Trans Colón, entre la Sinanoga y Avda Colón

Caracas, Venezuela

and to diplomatic representatives of Venezuela accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 March 1994.