

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/018/2001

UA 39/01 Fear for Safety / Possible "Disappearance" 12 February 2001

COLOMBIA **Baudilio ROLON**
Aleiro MARQUEZ
Civilian populations of El Tarra and Tibú, department of Norte de Santander

Two civilians have "disappeared" after reportedly being abducted by paramilitary gunmen. Amnesty International fears for their safety, and for that of other civilians in the area, who have come under repeated attack by army-backed paramilitaries.

On the morning of 7 February, Baudilio Rolon and Albeiro Marquez from the hamlet of Filo Gringo in the municipality of El Tarra "disappeared" while working on a car at a garage in the town of Tibú, department of Norte de Santander. They were reportedly abducted by paramilitary gunmen.

Since a paramilitary offensive was launched in the municipalities of El Tarra and Tibú in 1999, many civilians have been subjected to serious human rights violations including killings and "disappearances". In February 2000 a large group of paramilitaries entered the community of Filo Gringo and burned much of the village to the ground, despite regional authorities and the Colombian Army having been warned that an attack was imminent (see UA 16/00, AMR 23/02/00, 24 January 2000 and follow-up AMR 23/10/00, 8 March 2000). In April 2000, paramilitaries shot dead 21 members of a displaced community sheltering in the area (see UA 80/00, AMR 23/17/00, 7 April 2000).

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have repeatedly denounced the continued paramilitary activity and serious human rights violations that are taking place in the municipalities of El Tarra and Tibú. These attacks take place despite a heavy military presence in the region. As such, they highlight the continued failure of the authorities to combat paramilitarism and protect civilians in the region, irrespective of repeated United Nations (UN) recommendations to the Colombian Government to take action and government promises to do so.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Baudilio Rolon and Albeiro Marquez, who were reportedly abducted by paramilitaries on 7 February, calling for a full and impartial investigation into their "disappearance" and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian populations of the municipalities of El Tarra and Tibú, Norte de Santander Department, and asking what measures the government and armed forces will take to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern at the failure of the government and armed forces to take steps to protect the civilian population of El Tarra and Tibú and combat paramilitary groups in the area, despite repeated warnings of impending paramilitary attacks;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Norte de Santander, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No.7-26
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA
Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351
Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Foreign Relations
Dr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto
Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Palacio San Carlos
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telex: 45209 MRRE CO
Faxes: + 57 1 562 7822
Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of V Brigade
Comandante de la V Brigada
General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
Calle 14, Carrera 33
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia
Faxes: +57 76 359 189 / 334 390
Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Commandante

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 26 March 2001.