

UA 244/01

Fear for

COLOMBIAFlor María Gaviria (f), Fabiola Villalba Herrera (f) and the civilian population in the district of Frías, Falan municipality, in the north of Tolima Department

Killed:John Navarrete (m), Cecilia Cortes (f), Hernán Cortes (m) (m), Uberney Cortes (m), Arley González (m), Jezid Aros (m), Pedro Urrego (m), Aldubier Tirana (m), Marco Lino Aguirre (m), Rafael Jiménez (m), Vicente Rodríguez (m)

Eleven people have been killed in Tolima department following an incursion of army-backed paramilitaries in the region. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of the civilian population of the municipality of Falan.

On 15 September approximately 30 men in military uniform arrived in the district of Frías, claiming to be members of the *Frente Omar Isaza* (Omar Isaza Front) of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia. Upon entering the district they reportedly produced a list of names and forcibly removed several people from their homes, taking them to the village plaza.

John Navarrete, Cecilia Cortes, Hernán Cortes, Uberney Cortes, Arley González, Jezid Aros, Pedro Urrego, Aldubier Tirana, Marco Lino Aguirre, Rafael Jiménez and Vicente Rodríguez were reportedly killed in the plaza with gunshots to the head. Flor María Gaviria and Fabiola Villalba Herrera were reportedly taken to hospital due to the gravity of the injuries they received.

The killings follow recent paramilitary incursions in Tolima department (see UA 176/01, AMR 23/070/01, 18 July, 2001). On 15 July, paramilitaries reportedly entered the communities of Pantanilla, Villanueva and El Bledo in the municipality of El Libano, near Mariquita, threatening and beating members of the communities. A young man's stomach was reportedly perforated after he was beaten with the barrel of a rifle.

Amnesty International has serious concerns for the safety of the civilian population in these areas following the recent massacres, given that despite previous international condemnation the Colombian authorities have apparently taken no decisive action to confront the paramilitaries.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. In the last five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. The Colombian government suspended the constitutional 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 work with the support of the security forces - by action or omission - in many areas of the country. Guerrilla forces have also carried out numerous killings and other violations of international humanitarian law against members of peasant, black, and indigenous communities, whom they accuse of collaborating with the security forces or paramilitary groups.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Flor María Gaviria and Fabiola Villalba Herrera and urging the authorities to guarantee their immediate safety;
- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee the safety of the civilian population in northern areas of Tolima department;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the reported killing of the 11 people named above;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in northern areas of the department of Tolima, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations 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 1566 2071
Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado, Carrera 52 OFI. 217
CAN
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 0059
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Gobernador del Departamento de Tolima

Sr. Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo Martínez
Gobernación de Tolima
Calle 10 y 11, Carrera 3
Ibagué, Tolima, COLOMBIA
Telegrams: Gobernador de Tolima, Tolima, Colombia
Fax: + 57 82 638588
Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (CSPP)
Apartado Aéreo 22803
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 6 November 2001.