

UA 307/01

Fear for**COLOMBIA Ana Rubiela Cárdenas de Díaz (f) and her family****Killed: Leonardo Díaz Becerra**

---

Paramilitary gunmen have attacked Ana Rubiela Cárdenas and her family in Caldas Department, killing her husband and threatening to kill her and her children. Ana's sister is a human rights defender, and the attack may be linked to her campaigning for justice in cases of previous human rights violations against her family members.

Men in military uniforms carrying assault rifles reportedly broke into the family's house at 4am on 24 November. They were wearing armbands with the letters "AUC", of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia.

They reportedly dragged Ana and her four young children to high ground behind the house, which is on the Colombianita Farm, in the rural Bonafort area of Ríosucio municipality, department of Caldas. They demanded to know, "*donde tenían guardadas las armas y donde estaban los hijos de puta guerrilleros*", "where have they hidden the weapons and where are the guerrilla sons of bitches".

The gunmen reportedly threatened to kill them if they did not answer quickly. Ana heard her husband Leonardo screaming in another part of the house. Eventually the gunmen left, and Ana found her husband's body: he had his hands tied behind his back, and he had been wounded in the chest.

This attack, and the death threats, could be connected with the work of Ana's sister María Eugenia Cárdenas, a member of the Ríosucio-Caldas branch of the *Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (ASFADDES), Association of Relatives of the Detained Disappeared, a national non-governmental human rights organization working to bring to justice those responsible for forced "disappearances" of several members of her family. In response to this latest killing of a member of the Cárdenas family, ASFADDES have now closed their Ríosucio offices. This latest attack raises serious concerns for the safety of ASFADDES members and for their ability to carry out their work.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

María Eugenia Cárdenas has herself reportedly been threatened and harassed by members of army-backed paramilitary groups. Her brother-in-law was abducted and killed in April 2000, apparently by paramilitaries.

ASFADDES is a non-governmental organization made up of relatives of people who have "disappeared" during the conflict in Colombia between the armed forces and their paramilitary allies, and the armed opposition groups who control a large part of the country. It aims to discover what has happened to the "disappeared" and bring those responsible to justice. Many ASFADDES members, and other human rights defenders and witnesses of human rights violations, have "disappeared", been killed or threatened with death by the security forces and their paramilitary allies in order to protect their impunity (see UA 140/01, AMR 23/059/01, 5 June 2001). Two members of the Medellín branch of ASFADDES, Angel Quintero and Claudia Monsalve, "disappeared" in October 2000. Their whereabouts remain unknown. (See UA 259/00, AMR 23/081/00, 9 October 2000).

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

- expressing concern that Ana Rubiela Cárdenas de Díaz and her family have reportedly been attacked by paramilitary gunmen, who killed her husband Leonardo Díaz Becerra and threatened to kill her and her children;
- calling for a full investigation into the attack, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of Ana Rubiela Cárdenas de Díaz, her family and of ASFADDES members in Riosucio, so they can continue their work of promoting and protecting human rights in accordance with international human rights standards;
- urging the Colombian government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in the UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, the Organization of American States *Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution [AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99)], and in line with repeated recommendations made by the UN to the Colombian government to take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Caldas, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

**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**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

Governor of Caldas Department

Sr. Luis Alfonso Arias Aristizábal,  
Gobernador del Departamento de Caldas, Gobernación de Caldas,  
Carrera 21, Calle 22 y 23,  
Manizales, Caldas, Colombia

**Telegram: Gobernador de Caldas, Manizales, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 875 6183**

**Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador**

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,  
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior,  
Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 562 5298/ 562 9890**

**Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro**

**COPIES TO:**Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared"

ASFADDES - Nacional

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 11 January 2001.