

COLOMBIA Members of the non-governmental human rights organization *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*

Inhabitants of the municipality of Dabeiba and neighbouring municipalities, including forcibly displaced communities in the department of Antioquia.

On 9 March 2000, around 200 suspected paramilitaries reportedly set up camp near to the town of Dabeiba with a stated aim to "*hacer limpieza*", "cleanse the area". Their arrival, and a number of recent killings in the area, has heightened Amnesty International's concern for the safety of people living in Dabeiba and neighbouring towns in the department of Antioquia.

This concern extends to displaced communities sheltering there as well as members of the non-governmental human rights organization, *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace, who work closely with them. Displaced communities, and the human rights workers who assist them, are frequently labelled as guerrilla sympathizers by the armed forces and their paramilitary allies and as such have been exposed to serious human rights violations by paramilitaries.

The day before the camp was set up, husband and wife Jorge and Magdalena were reportedly killed by paramilitaries in Dabeiba.

On 19 February, paramilitaries reportedly shot dead five people in the community of San José de Apartadó, department of Antioquia, despite a heavy military presence in the area. San José de Apartadó is a community of some 1,000 people displaced from the Urabá region of north-western Colombia in 1996 and 1997 as a result of paramilitary and guerrilla violence (see UA 42/00, AMR 23/08/00, 21 February 2000).

In recent days large numbers of paramilitaries have been reported to have been travelling between Frontino and Chigorodó, a heavily militarised municipality north of Dabeiba. Furthermore, paramilitaries were reported to have held a meeting in La Caleta, a farm in the municipality of Turbo used by displaced communities.

The gunmen, mostly in military attire, reportedly set up camp in an area known as La Base and at the El Jague farm, a short distance from the town of Dabeiba. They appear to have been allowed to do this despite a heavy military presence in Dabeiba - the scene of intense fighting over the last year between security forces and their paramilitary auxiliaries against armed opposition groups operating in the area. On 9 March, the day the camp was set up, police in Dabeiba were reportedly ordered to stay in their barracks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 11 November 1999, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on behalf of Diana Salamanca Martínez, who works for the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, after she was abducted by paramilitaries in Dabeiba. Diana Martínez, who was released three days later, had been working closely with the displaced communities (see EXTRA 158/99, AMR 23/79/99 and follow ups).

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over

the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. 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 in many areas of the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of Dabeiba, in particular displaced communities sheltering there and members of *Justicia y Paz* working with them, after the reported arrival, on 9 March 2000, of a large contingent of paramilitaries;
- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by those at risk themselves, are taken to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern that a large number of paramilitaries has been able to move into the region, apparently unhindered by the security forces, despite a heavy military presence in the area;
- urging that immediate measures be taken to combat and dismantle paramilitary groups in the region in line with UN recommendations and repeated governmental promises;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into links between the XVII and IV Brigades of the Colombian Army which operate in this region and paramilitary groups in the department of Antioquia, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

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

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

Dr. Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia
Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Telegrams: Gobernador Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

Faxes: + 574 381 1342

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Regional Military Commanders:

XVII Brigade

General Vargas, Comandante XVII Brigada del Ejército
Carepá, Urabá, Antioquia, Colombia

Tel/Faxes: + 57 4 823 6605 / 823 6844 (ask for "tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander

IV Brigade

Brigadier General Coronel Eduardo Herrera Verbel
Comandante de la IV Brigada, Calle 50 No. 76-126
Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 4 2305127 (ask for "tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Brigadier General / Dear Brigadier General

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental organisation

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz

Apartado Aéreo 31861

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 25 April 2000.