

UA 100/00

Fear for**COLOMBIA "Disappeared": Cielo GIL ECHEVERRÍ**

Gustavo CASTELLÓN ECHEVERRÍ, aged 11  
Daniel HERRERA ECHEVERRÍ, aged 14  
Alfonso ARENAS ECHEVERRÍ, aged 7  
Diana HERRERA ECHEVERRÍ, aged 5  
Denán de Jesús GONZÁLEZ, aged 13  
Breiner ROBLES PÉREZ, aged 11  
Alcira GÓMEZ

Orlando BADILLO

María ESTRADA

Jesús FLÓREZ ESTRADA

At least six peasant farmers

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**Fear for safety: civilian inhabitants of Cerro Azul and Caño Huila**

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At least 17 civilians have "disappeared" from two communities in the central Magdalena Medio area of Colombia, reportedly at the hands of army-backed paramilitaries. Paramilitaries have threatened to kill other civilians in the area, and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety.

A group of 400 paramilitaries apparently maintained a presence in Cerro Azul, in the municipality of San Pablo in southern Bolivar department, between 21 and 26 April. They reportedly abducted four peasant farmers, forcing them onto a helicopter which took off towards nearby San Blas, where there is a paramilitary camp. It is of serious concern that a helicopter was able to fly in a heavily-militarized area and that paramilitary forces continue to operate unhindered there, despite repeated national and international appeals to the Colombian authorities to take action against paramilitary forces operating in the Cerro Azul area.

On the morning of 25 April paramilitary forces set up a checkpoint near the Barrancabermeja naval base (*Armada Fluvial de Barrancabermeja*) and maintained it for around an hour, in an area known as Caño de La Rompida, in the municipality of Yondó. They reportedly abducted María Estrada and her son Jesús Flórez Estrada, Orlando Badilla and two others. A body believed to be that of María Estrada was found in the River Magdalena on 27 April, though it has not yet been officially identified. Amnesty International is seriously concerned that paramilitary forces were able to mount a checkpoint near naval units despite repeated international denunciations of paramilitary checkpoints in recent weeks (See UA 81/00, AI Index: AMR 23/19/00, 10 April 2000) and despite repeated calls on the Colombian authorities to take decisive action to combat paramilitary forces in the Barrancabermeja area.

On 26 April paramilitary forces forced a boat to stop in Caño Huila on the river Magdalena, in the municipality of Yondó. They reportedly abducted Cielo Gil Echeverri and the four young members of his family named above, as well as 13-year-old Denán de Jesús González, 11-year-old Breiner Robles Pérez and Alcira Gómez.

**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 in many areas of the country.

Guerrilla forces have also committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, including executing those they accuse of being security force or paramilitary force collaborators.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of civilian inhabitants of the municipalities of Yondó, department of Antioquia and Cerro Azul in the municipality of San Pablo, department of Bolívar, after at least 15 "disappearances" carried out by paramilitary forces who have threatened further attacks;
- urging that all steps are taken to guarantee the safety of the civilian population in this region;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the reported "disappearances" detailed in this Urgent Action;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the municipality of Yondó, department of Antioquia and the municipality of San Pablo in Bolívar Department, 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 1 286 7434 / 284 2186 / 337 1351**

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

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No. 8-09, Piso 2  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5584 / 342 3201 / 341 9739**

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

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**

**COPIES TO:**

Regional Non-governmental Human Rights Organization  
CREDHOS, AA 505, Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 9 June 2000.