

UA 108/00

Fear for**COLOMBIA Human rights defenders****Killed: Jesús Ramiro ZAPATA HOYOS, human rights defender**

Human rights defender Jesús Ramiro Zapata Hoyos was abducted and killed by gunmen on 3 May. Amnesty International is extremely concerned for the security of other human rights defenders in the department of Antioquia.

Jesús Ramiro Zapata Hoyos was a leading member of the *Comité de Derechos Humanos del Nordeste* (Northeastern Human Rights Committee) and the *Colectivo de Derechos Humanos Semillas de Libertad* (Human Rights Collective, Seeds of Liberty), an umbrella organisation of human rights NGOs.

He was apparently abducted from a bar in the municipality of Segovia, department of Antioquia. The next morning an unidentified caller told his family to collect the body from the outskirts of Segovia.

The day he was abducted Jesús Ramiro had reported to local authorities that: "*Del 15 de abril al viernes 28 han preguntado 8 veces por mí algunos paramilitares nuevos que no me conocen*", "Between 15 and Friday 28 April new paramilitaries in the area who do not know me have enquired about my whereabouts eight times".

On 3 April 2000, a group of 500 paramilitaries had reportedly entered the municipality of Segovia and the neighbouring municipality of Remedios and camped in the area of Otu, in Remedios. A large number of troops are stationed in the area, but did nothing to confront them.

The Segovia Human Rights Committee, a non-governmental human rights organization, has played an important part in denouncing human rights violations in the area, including a joint armed forces-paramilitary incursion in the town of Segovia in April 1996 during which at least 17 people were killed or "disappeared". An army captain was convicted last year for his part in the massacre in collaboration with paramilitary forces, after judicial investigations. Human rights defenders and others who denounce human rights violations and the strong links between the armed forces and paramilitary forces have themselves been accused of human rights violations committed by the security forces or their paramilitary allies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Paramilitary groups have killed several thousand civilians over the past five years, and the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. 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.

The security forces and their paramilitary allies have frequently labeled human rights organizations as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, so they can present them as legitimate targets in the counter-insurgency war. At least 25 human rights defenders have been killed or "disappeared" in the last three years. Some armed opposition groups also refuse to respect the legitimacy and independence of organisations which belong to civil society.

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

- expressing concern at the possible extrajudicial execution of Jesús Ramiro Zapata, and urging a full and impartial investigation into the killing, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of members of the *Comité de Derechos Humanos del Nordeste* and the *Colectivo de Derechos Humanos Semillas de Libertad*, and urging that all measures they deem appropriate are taken to guarantee their safety;
- 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 Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* adopted on 9 December 1998, and the *Organization of American States Human Rights Defenders in the Americas* resolution adopted on 7 June 1999 [AG/RES. 1671 (XXIX-O/99)] and in line with repeated recommendations made by the UN to the Colombian Government;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Antioquia, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and UN recommendations.

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 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 2186/289 3377

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excmo. Sr Presidente

Vice-President of the Republic

Señor Vicepresidente Gustavo Bell Lemus
 Alto Consejero Presidencial para asuntos de Derechos Humanos y lucha Contra la Corrupción
 Cra. 8 #7-26,
 Palacio de Nariño,
 Santafé de Bogotá

Fax: + 57 1 337 1351

Salutation: Dear Vice-President / Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente

Minister of Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Palacio Echeverry
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.
 Santafé de Bogotá
 COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 286 8025

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

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

Fax: + 574 381 1342

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Alternative Legal Association

SEMBRAR

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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 16 June 2000.