

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/85/00

UA 329/00

Fear for

COLOMBIALuis Angel RAMOS MESA, teacher and union leader
Other teachers in Antioquia department

**Killed: Wilmar Nicolás ZULUAGA MONTOYA
Conrado Antonio ZULUAGA MONTOYA**

Army-backed paramilitaries have reportedly abducted a leading member of a teachers' union during a raid on a farming community in in Antioquia department. Paramilitaries are reportedly looking for five teachers in the region whom they accuse of being guerrilla collaborators, and Amnesty International fears that other teachers in the region are in danger.

Luis Angel Ramos Mesa was reportedly abducted on 24 October, during a paramilitary raid on the community of Minitas, in the municipality of Granada, where he is a schoolteacher. During the raid the paramilitaries apparently killed two peasant farmers, brothers Wilmar Nicolás and Conrado Antonio Zuluaga Montoya.

Luis Ramos is a leader of the departmental teachers' trade union, the *Asociación de Institutores de Antioquia* (ADIDA), Association of Teachers of Antioquia. For some time he had been reporting harassment and intimidation against him by police agents and soldiers to the authorities.

Teachers and trade unionists have frequently been accused of being guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. These accusations have often been followed by serious human rights violations. Over the past two years dozens of ADIDA members have been victims of political killings by both sides in Colombia's civil conflict, and over 150 have been forced to flee their homes.

Since the beginning of August, the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, paramilitary group is reported to have maintained a strong presence in and around Granada and the neighbouring municipality of El Santuario, where they have killed around 50 people. (See UA 262/00, AI Index: AMR 23/66/00, 4 September 2000.)

They have been able to operate a checkpoint in Alto del Palmar, in El Santuario, despite the presence of a nearby army base. The paramilitaries reportedly have a list of people they plan to kill.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Colombian armed forces, and their paramilitary allies, commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Paramilitary groups have killed several thousand civilians over the past five years. The government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations, and in 1989 issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups, yet they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

Similarly, armed opposition groups have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, for example executing those they accuse of being security force or paramilitary collaborators and supporters.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Luis Angel RAMOS MESA, who was reportedly abducted by paramilitaries on 24 October in Minitas, municipality of Granada, Antioquia department;
- urging that there should be a full and impartial investigation into the abduction of Luis Angel RAMOS MESA to establish his whereabouts and that all efforts be made to secure his immediate release;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the possible extrajudicial execution of the two peasant farmers named above, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take action to protect schoolteachers and other civilians in Granada and El Santuario, where paramilitaries are reportedly looking for five schoolteachers and a number of other people named on a "death list";
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the region, urging that the results are made public and those who support and participate 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/ 286 6842/ 284 2186/ 337 1351 / 282 0977

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Minister of the Interior

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

Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5884 / 342 3201

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr Alfonso Gómez Méndez
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2022 (If the call is answered, say "Fax, por favor" and wait for the signal)

Salutation: Estimado Fiscal General/Dear Attorney General

Minister of Education

Francisco Jose Lloreda Mera
Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Ministerio de Educación
Avenida Eldorado - CAN, Of. 501, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Educación, Colombia

Faxes: +57 1 222 4578

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human rights organisation
Corporación Jurídica Libertad
AA 49027, Medellín, 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 7 December 2000.