

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/99/00

UA 370/00

Fear for

COLOMBIA Jorge BETANCUR ECHEVERRI, prosecutor
Jairo CARVAJAL PÉREZ, judicial secretary
Dora MUÑOZ PÉREZ (f), judge

Three judicial officials were reportedly abducted by unidentified gunmen on 27 November in the municipality of Amalfi, in Antioquia department. They were carrying out criminal investigations in an area severely affected by Colombia's long running armed conflict.

Several armed opposition groups operate in the area, including the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army. They are doing battle for control of the area with army-backed paramilitary groups belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A number of judicial officials have been summarily executed in the past few years, or have "disappeared". Many of them were investigating violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by guerrilla forces, or the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

A judicial secretary was abducted by gunmen in Amalfi on 4 April, and on 4 November a prosecutor was reportedly abducted in the neighbouring municipality of Frontino, by guerillas of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Neither has been seen since.

Paramilitaries reportedly abducted seven judicial investigators on 10 March, in the municipality of La Paz, in the northeastern department of Cesar. Their whereabouts are now unknown.

Since February 1997 at least 67 judicial officials are believed to have been killed in the course of their duties. Army-backed paramilitary forces have routinely intimidated and attacked judicial officials to prevent them investigating violations of human rights. Senior judicial officials have frequently complained that the security forces have not given them enough support when they try to serve arrest warrants on paramilitaries. Other judicial officials have been threatened, kidnapped and killed by guerrilla organizations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the three judicial officials named above;
- urging the authorities to do everything in their power to find out where they are and ensure that they are not harmed;
- urging full and impartial investigations into their abduction or kidnapping, that the results are made public and that those responsible are brought to justice.

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
Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogota, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 2186/289 3377
Salutation: Dear President / 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, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 337 1351
Salutation: Dear Vice-President / Excmo. Sr. Vicepresidente

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 de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 4 381 1342
Salutation: Dear Governor/ Sr. Gobernador
**NB: From January 2001 the new Governor of Antioquia will be Sr. Guillermo Gaviria
Correa**

COPIES TO:

Office of the 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

Human Rights Organization
GIDH
Carrera 49, No.50-22, Of. 803
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 15 January 2001.