

PUBLIC

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UA 185/99 Fear for Safety/Extrajudicial Execution

28 July 1999

COLOMBIA **Fear for Safety: Gustavo Camacho Sangregorio, civic leaders and other inhabitants of Curumaní, Cesar department**

Killed: Cenen Carrascal, Eduardo Madarriaga, Faner Gutiérrez, Humberto Gil, José Gregorio Álvarez, Alberto Ríos Arevaldo, Numis Esther Camacho Sangregorio (f).

There is grave concern for the safety of the inhabitants of Curumaní, Cesar department, after paramilitaries killed seven people during an incursion into the municipality on 25 July 1999. Some of the paramilitaries reportedly warned those present that this was the start of a terror campaign. Community leaders and public officials, notably the leader of the municipal authority, Gustavo Camacho Sangregorio, have been receiving telephone death threats accusing them of being guerilla sympathisers.

At about 7am, a local bus travelling to villages in the municipality was stopped at Caño San Ignacio by a group of armed and uniformed paramilitaries. The paramilitaries made the passengers identify themselves, picked out Cenen Carrascal, Eduardo Madarriaga, Faner Gutiérrez, Humberto Gil and José Gregorio Álvarez, forced them off the bus and shot them dead. Leaving the other passengers, the group stole the bus and abandoned it some hours later in an area called La Conquista. Between Caño San Ignacio and La Conquista the paramilitaries would have driven past both a police station and an army base.

Although residents reported hearing the shots that killed the five men, the security forces made no attempt to stop the paramilitary force, although army and police patrols had been stepped up in Curumaní in the days leading up to the attack.

At 7.30am that day, another group of paramilitaries stopped a local health worker, Alberto Ríos Arevaldo, and his family, as they were travelling by car from Curumaní to the municipality of Pailitas. The paramilitaries drove back to Curumaní with Alberto Ríos Arevaldo, leaving his family under guard. His body was found later that day. His family were later released.

In Curumaní the paramilitaries went to the house of the *personera* (municipal ombudsman), Dr Numis Esther Camacho Sangregorio, who was well known for her human rights work. They shot her dead at her front door, 300 metres from Curumaní police station.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 Gustavo Camacho Sangregorio and the civilian population of the municipality of Curumaní, Cesar department;

- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety of Gustavo Camacho Sangregorio and other community leaders and officials in Curumaní, and investigate the death threats they have received;
- calling for prompt, full and impartial investigations into the killings carried out in Curumaní by a paramilitary force on 25 July 1999;
- urging that the results of the investigations be made public and that the perpetrators be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the municipality of Curumaní and urging that 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.

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 1 284 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
Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Commander of the Armed Forces

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin
 Comandante de las Fuerzas Militares
 Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia
Telegrams: Comandante Fuerzas Militares, Bogota, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 221 3653
Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander

Governor of the Department of Cesar

Dr Lucas Genecco
 Gobernador del Departamento del Cesar
 Gobernación del Cesar, Calle 16, No. 12-120
 Valledupar, Cesar, Colombia.
Telegrams: Gobernador, Cesar, Colombia
Fax: + 57 5 574 3250
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Alternative Legal Association,
 MINGA, AA 40303, 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 8 September 1999.