

UA 326/99

Fear for

COLOMBIA Miguel CIFUENTES] Peasant
Gilberto GUERRA] farmer
Andrés GIL] leaders
Libardo TRASLAVIÑA]

And communities of the municipality of Cantagallo

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for people living in the Cimitarra River Valley area, particularly the peasant farmer leaders named above, after reports that paramilitary groups have threatened to go there and kill peasant farmers, whom they have accused of belonging to guerilla forces.

The paramilitary threats coincide with a reported bombardment, on 15 December, of several communities in the Cimitarra River Valley - Yanacué, Coroncoro, Cuatrobocas, and San Lorenzo - (also in the municipality of Cantagallo, department of Bolívar), by Colombian armed forces.

The organization's concerns are heightened by the abduction of peasant farmer leaders Edgar Quiroga and Gildardo Fuentes by paramilitary forces on 28 November 1999 in a nearby municipality (see EXTRA 169/99, AMR 23/88/99, 29 November 1999).

According to information received, peasant farmer leaders belonging to the *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Cimitarra* (ACVC), Peasant Farmer Association of the Cimitarra Valley, have recently been labelled "secuestradores", "kidnappers", by the Colombian Army. Those labelled as subversive or accused of carrying out subversive activities by the security forces or their paramilitary allies often then become victim to serious human rights violations by paramilitary forces.

In 1998, Miguel Cifuentes, Gilberto Guerra, Libardo Traslaviña, Andrés Gil and Edgar Quiroga were part of a delegation of regional peasant farmer leaders who took part in negotiations with the government on behalf of displaced peasant farming communities from the department of Bolívar and neighbouring areas. The negotiations led to a signed agreement by the government that it would guarantee their safety and take action to combat paramilitary groups responsible for their displacement.

Several of the community representatives, however, have reportedly since been killed or threatened by paramilitary forces who continue to operate in the region, despite the heavy presence of the armed forces in the region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past 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 peasant farmer leaders Miguel Cifuentes, Gilberto Guerra, Libardo Traslaviña and Andrés Gil and the civilian population of the Cimitarra River Valley area, municipality of Cantagallo, department of Bolívar, after reports that paramilitary forces have threatened to kill peasant farmers in the area, whom they have labelled as "guerrillas";
- expressing concern for the safety of other leaders of peasant farming communities in the department of Bolívar;
- asking that all measures deemed appropriate by those under threat are taken to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Bolívar, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- asking the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and UN 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

Commander of the V Brigade

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
Comandante de la V Brigada
Carrera 33-14, Barrio Los Pinos
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 7 645 5051 / 635 1493

Salutation: Sr. General / Dear General

COPIES TO: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 14 February 2000.