

UA 64/99

Fear for

COLOMBIA Aníbal Jiménez]
Gabriel Graciano] Dead
Daniel Pino]

Oscar Martínez]
Antonio José Borja] Wounded
Nalfa Sánchez (F)]

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of residents of the "Peace Community" of San José de Apartadó, after a paramilitary attack on 4 April 1999 left three people dead and at least three others seriously injured.

Ten heavily armed men came into San José, in the municipality of Apartadó, Antioquia department, at about 11 pm, and split into two groups. One group rounded up four men, saying San José was "*una comunidad de guerrilleros*", "a guerrilla community", and demanded the names of the community's leaders. They took these four to the central square, together with Daniel Pino, whom they had brought from the nearby village of La Balsa, and Antonio José Borja, who was captured on the road between La Balsa and Apartadó. There the assailants opened fire, killing 16-year-old Gabriel Graciano and seriously injuring Oscar Martínez and Antonio José Borja. They cut Daniel Pino's stomach open with a machete, and he died some time later. Two others escaped from the square in the confusion.

The second group of paramilitaries went to the home of community leader Aníbal Jiménez and shot him dead in front of his family. Aníbal Jiménez was a founder member of the community and coordinated its education programs.

For half an hour after these killings, the paramilitary group threw grenades and fired at random. Community member Nalfa Sánchez was wounded by a grenade.

The community of San José de Apartadó is made up of around 1,000 people, forcibly displaced from their homes in the Urabá region in north-western Colombia in 1996 and 1997 by massacres committed by army-backed paramilitary groups and guerrilla organizations. In March 1997 they declared themselves a *Comunidad de Paz*, Peace Community, in an attempt to persuade warring factions to respect their neutrality and right to life. Since then, some 60 residents have "disappeared" or been killed, the majority by army-backed paramilitary groups, others by members of the Colombian army or the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the principal guerrilla organization. The community's plans for the first group of residents to return to their original communities on 7 April 1999 have now been suspended.

Inhabitants have repeatedly demanded that the government secure conditions for their safe return to the lands they have abandoned, and guarantee their safety in the community of San José, yet the authorities have persistently failed to act to end the campaign of attacks against them. The government has also failed to act when senior regional armed forces commanders and political leaders have publicly accused the community of being guerrilla sympathizers because they refuse to allow any armed group, including the Colombian army, to maintain a presence there.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with impunity. Over the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Hundreds of thousands have been displaced from their homes. Although in 1989 the government removed the legal basis for the Colombian armed forces to set up these paramilitary groups, they have grown and consolidated into nationwide organizations responsible for widespread and systematic human rights violations. They continue to operate, in many cases, with the support or acquiescence of the Colombian armed forces. The Colombian government have taken no effective steps to control them or hold them accountable for their criminal actions.

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

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the paramilitary attack on the community of San José de Apartadó on 4 April, in which three people died and at least four were seriously injured;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of all those still resident in the community of San José de Apartadó;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments;
- reminding Colombia's government of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person".

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: + 571 284 2186/289 3377/ 286 7434

E-mail pastrana@presidencia.gov.co

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence:

Dr Rodrigo Lloreda
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO / 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez
 Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación
 AA 29855
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2000 (when ansaphone picks up dial 2022 for fax)

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

Governor of the Department of Antioquia
Dr Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia
Gobernación de Antioquia, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

Telegrams: Gobernador de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

Fax: + 574 381 1342

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Regional Military Commander:

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
Comandante XVII Brigada del Ejército
Carepá, Urabá, Antioquia, Colombia

Tel/Fax: 5748 823 6601

Salutation: Sr. Comandante/ Dear Commander Carreño

COPIES TO:

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace
Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, Santafé de Bogotá

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 18 May 1999.