

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/21/98

UA 104/98 Fear for safety / Extrajudicial execution

6 April 1998

COLOMBIA All members of the community of El Jordan and 14 teachers in the municipality of San Carlos, Antioquia Department

Extrajudicially executed: Rosmira Jiménez Gallego (f), teacher and 4 peasant farmers

After the recent extrajudicial execution of five prominent community activists from the community of El Jordan by paramilitary forces there is grave concern for the safety of members of the community of El Jordan. There is also concern for teachers under threat of death in the municipality of San Carlos, Antioquia Department, in which El Jordan is situated.

On 23 March 1998 members of a paramilitary force reportedly abducted Rosmira Gallego, and four peasant farmers from their homes. Their bodies were discovered nearby the following day.

Rosmira Gallego was one of a number of teachers from the municipality of San Carlos who had received numerous death threats from paramilitary groups in the area. In September 1997, a group of 16 teachers, including Rosmira Gallego, went to the *Comité Especial de Amenazados de la Secretaría de Educación Departamental*, Special Committee for the Threatened of the Departmental Ministry of Education in Medellín, the capital of Antioquia, in order to seek protection.

Their request was rejected on the grounds that they were not considered to be at serious risk.

Although the teachers and other members of the community continued to inform the authorities of the repeated death threats no measures were taken by the authorities to protect them or to investigate the threats.

The Asociación de Institutores de Antioquia, (ADIDA), Antioquia Teachers Association, of which Rosmira Gallego was a member, has repeatedly denounced the death threats that many of its members suffer. Over the last year 40 teachers affiliated to ADIDA have received death threats and been forced to flee their homes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians, including an increasing number of teachers and peasant farmers, have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country.

Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the Colombian armed forces to combat and disband such groups, paramilitary forces have continued to kill and "disappear" perceived opponents with impunity in many areas of the country and continue to work with the support of the security forces. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has made repeated promises to improve the human rights situation and to dismantle paramilitary forces. However, no steps have been taken to control their actions and to hold members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations.

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

- expressing grave concern for the safety of members of the community of El Jordan and also all teachers in the municipality of San Carlos, department of Antioquia;
- calling for all necessary measures to be taken to guarantee the safety of other teachers and members of the community at risk;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Rosmira Jiménez Gallego and four peasant farmers, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area and urging that those members of the security forces 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 governmental commitments

APPEALS TO:President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 carrera 8 No. 7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejía
 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

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 Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia

Faxes: + 574 381 1342

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

Minister of Education

Dr. Jaime Niño Diez
 Ministro de Educación Nacional
 Ministerio de Educación
 Avenida Eldorado - CAN, Of. 501
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Educación, Bogotá, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Teacher's Union

Asociación de Institutores de Antioquia (ADIDA), Antioquia Teachers Asociación
AA 51421, 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 18 May 1998.