

UA 183/98 Fear for Safety / "Disappearances"

24 June 1998

COLOMBIA Civilians in San Francisco, Sonsón, Cocorna, Granada, La Unión
municipalities, department of Antioquia.

Extrajudicially executed: Argiro Ramírez Guzmán (Municipality of San Francisco);

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of civilians in the department of Antioquia following recent killings and death threats against them by security forces and paramilitary groups.

Members of the counter-insurgency *Batallón Granaderos*, Granaderos Battalion, have reportedly threatened communities in the municipality of San Francisco with a paramilitary incursion if the inhabitants do not disclose the whereabouts of guerrilla forces in the area. Despite a heavy military presence in the area, Argiro Ramírez Guzmán, a municipal worker, was reportedly killed by paramilitary forces in the municipality on 24 May 1998.

In Cocorna municipality, which is also heavily militarized, paramilitary presence has reportedly increased in recent months. Paramilitary forces announced an imminent massacre in the municipality and threatened to kill owners of food stores unless they abandon the region.

Paramilitary groups operating in Granada municipality are reportedly threatening an imminent incursion. On 4 June, Ovidio Antonio López Jaramillo and Hernando Ciro

López, who had reportedly fled the hamlet of La Honda in the nearby Carmen de Viboral municipality following threats by members of a paramilitary group, were killed in the municipality of La Unión.

On 7 June a group of heavily armed men, believed to be members of a paramilitary organization, set up a checkpoint in the hamlet of Vallejuelo in Carmen de Viboral municipality. They threatened the local inhabitants, warning them of an imminent massacre. Witnesses have reported that paramilitary groups have operated in unison with members of the *Batallón Juan del Corral*, Juan del Corral Battalion of IV Brigade, in recent weeks. This battalion's presence in the area has coincided with an increase in paramilitary checkpoints on the road between La Unión and Sonsón municipalities.

On 13 June approximately 30 paramilitary group members identifying themselves as members of the *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá* (ACCU), Córdoba and Urabá Peasant Farmer Self-Defence Groups, reportedly established a checkpoint on the outskirts of San Miguel hamlet. They forced passers by to shout slogans in support of the paramilitary group and checked their names against a *lista negra*, black list, containing the names and identity card numbers of local inhabitants considered to be guerrilla collaborators. Joih Jairo Rojas was reportedly forcibly abducted at the checkpoint by the paramilitary group and subsequently killed.

A series of recent paramilitary massacres carried out in different regions of Colombia, including the department of Antioquia, has heightened concern for the safety of the civilian population in the above-mentioned communities.

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.

President Ernesto Samper Pizano has repeatedly promised to improve the human rights situation and to dismantle paramilitary forces, but no steps have been taken to control their actions and to hold members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations. The Attorney General recently stated that over 200 outstanding arrest warrants issued against alleged paramilitary members responsible for widespread human rights violations have still not been acted upon by the security forces.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of inhabitants of the municipalities of San Francisco, Sonsón, Cocorna, Granada and La Unión in the department of Antioquia;
- urging for full and impartial investigations into the reported killings of civilians, that the results be made public and that those responsible 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 found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government 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

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
Fax: + 574 381 1342
Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor

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 de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO / 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Alternative Legal Association, SEMBRAR, AA 34692, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country. If possible, please also write to your own political representatives including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- expressing concern that some of the municipalities mentioned above are facing the threat of possible paramilitary incursions after warnings of possible attacks against the community of Simití were issued;
- urging your government to take immediate action to press the Colombian Government to take immediate measures to protect the civilian community.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 august 1998.