

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance" / Fear for Safety

4 April 1996

COLOMBIA Rito Sobricama, indigenous leader

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Rito Sobricama who has not been seen since he was abducted, in circumstances suggesting possible involvement of members of the security forces, on 1 April 1996, in the central park of Turbo, in the Urabá region of Antioquia Department.

On 1 April 1996, Rito Sobricama, Julio César Salazar and Martiniano Baniamá, members of *Cabildo Mayor Indígena del Bajo Atrato-CAMIZBA*, Lower Atrato-CAMIZBA Community Governing Council, arrived in Turbo coming from Riosucio, Chocó department to carry out activities related to their work as community leaders in the regional office of the *División de Asuntos Indígenas del Ministerio del Interior*, Indigenous Affairs Department of the Ministry of the Interior.

After they had left, several unidentified people arrived at the office and asked "*¿Dónde están los guerrilleros que vinieron hace un rato?*", "where are the guerrillas who were here a moment ago?". On realizing that the three were no longer there, they left.

Julio César Salazar and Martiniano Baniamá went to a bank while Rito Sobricama waited for them in the park. When they returned to the park they could not find Rito Sobricama. People in the park told them that "*varias desconocidas personas se habían llevado a la fuerza a un negro y a un indio*", "several unknown people took a black man and an indigenous man away by force". Rito Sobricama has not been seen since this incident and there is serious concern for his safety.

Rito Sobricama is a member of the Wounaan indigenous community, from the Marcial Community in Bajo Atrato, Chocó department.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Members of indigenous communities have frequently been subjected to human rights violations by the security forces who accuse them of collaborating with guerrilla organizations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Rito Sobricama and urging an immediate investigation to establish his whereabouts;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into his "disappearance", for the results to be made public and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice;

- urging that, if he is in detention, he be treated humanely and allowed access to lawyers, relatives and medical treatment;
- asking that he be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or immediately released;
- asking that members of the security forces and paramilitary responsible for human rights violations against indigenous people be brought to justice;

- urging that all appropriate measures are taken to ensure that indigenous leaders, indigenous organizations and their members are able to pursue their legitimate activities without fear for their physical integrity.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 7176 / 284 7186

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper

2) Procurator General

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Vásquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723

Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación / Dear Dr. Vásquez

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 286 04 85 / 288 7177 / 284 0214

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá
Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 245 5292 / 288 2828

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES TO:

Conferencia Episcopal de Colombia

A.A. 7448

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 16 May 1996.