

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Executions / Fear for Safety

17 February 1994

COLOMBIA: José del Carmen BALCEDO  
Ciro BLANCO CACERES  
Adolfo CALDERON FLOREZ  
José Alexis FUENTES GUERRERO  
Juan LOZANO GONZALEZ  
Fructuoso RINCON PAEZ  
Elizabeth TABARES (f), all members of fishing community

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Amnesty International has learned with concern that on 3 January 1994 members of the Colombian armed forces reportedly killed ten civilians, including the seven people named above. All were members of the fishing community of Puerto Lleras, Saravena municipality, Arauca department.

According to the written testimony of eye-witnesses, during the morning of 3 January an attachment of soldiers from the *Reveiz Pizarro* battalion, whose base in Saravena had been attacked by unknown persons earlier that morning, arrived in the community of Puerto Lleras in three trucks and two helicopters. The soldiers reportedly attacked the community, killing ten civilians. Witnesses report that some of those killed were subsequently dressed in military uniforms by their attackers, photographed and later presented as guerrillas killed in an armed confrontation. Eight bodies were recovered, the two others are believed to have been thrown by the soldiers into the river Arauca.

Following the killings, the remainder of the community were reportedly forced to lie face down for 24 hours on the patio of one of the houses, which was ransacked. When the soldiers finally left Puerto Lleras survivors state that they were threatened with death if they disclosed what had taken place. Several people from Puerto Lleras have presented written complaints to the authorities, to the municipal ombudsman, *personero*, and to the Special Investigations Unit of the Procurator General's office, *Oficina de Investigaciones Especiales de la Procuraduría General de la Nación*. There is concern for the safety of those remaining in Puerto Lleras.

An investigation into the killings has been initiated by the Military Tribunal of Saravena, *Juzgado de Instrucción Penal Militar*.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President César Gaviria Trujillo has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Civilians living in areas where guerrilla forces are active are often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and have, as a result, been subjected to extrajudicial execution and other abuses. Often the army has attempted to disguise extrajudicial executions as armed confrontation by dressing up the victims with military-style uniforms. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail

**letters either in Spanish or in your own language:**

- expressing concern at the reported extrajudicial execution of ten members of a fishing community, including the seven people named above, by members of the Colombian armed forces on 3 January 1994;
- urging that the investigation already initiated into the killings be thorough, that the results be made public and those found responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that those allegedly involved in the killings be suspended from active duty pending the result of the investigation;
- urging that the government take all possible measures to protect the lives of the inhabitants of Puerto Lleras so that they can carry on their lives in peace.

**APPEALS TO:**1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434; 287 7939**

**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Gaviria**

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla  
 Procurador General de la Nación  
 Procuraduría General  
 Edificio Banco Ganadero, Carrera 5, No. 15-80,  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472**

**Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Arrieta**

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño  
 Defensor del Pueblo  
 Defensoría del Pueblo  
 Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo Bogota, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 288 6683**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño**

4) Minister of Defence

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
 Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Andean Commission of Jurists  
Comisión Andina de Juristas  
AA 58533, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Human Rights and Educational Organization  
Señores  
CINEP  
AA 25916, Santa Fe 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 31 March 1994.