

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 432/94 Possible Extrajudicial Execution / Fear for safety 7 December 1994

COLOMBIA **Ciro REYES, community leader**

Another community leader has been killed in Ocaña, Norte de Santander department, further heightening fears for the safety of all popular leaders in the area, many of whom have received death threats during 1994.

According to witnesses, on 27 November 1994 *Ciro Reyes* was shot dead at his home in Ocaña's Santa Clara district by two men on a motorbike. *Ciro Reyes* was Secretary General of the management committee, *Secretario General de la Junta Directiva*, of a community housing project in Ocaña, which has been taking over unused land to provide homes, some for families forced to leave their own homes by fighting between the armed forces and guerrillas in the region.

Several popular activists and community leaders have been killed in the Santa Clara district of Ocaña during 1994 (see UA 204/94, AMR 23/45/94, 27 May and follow-up AMR 23/84/94, 27 October). A "black list" of 60 local community and popular leaders is known to have appeared in Ocaña. Those on the list were threatened with death if they did not leave the region and the threats have, in some cases, been carried out. It is not at present known if *Ciro Reyes'* name was one of those on the list.

Paramilitary groups operate in the area with apparent impunity, despite the presence of a permanent army base in Santa Clara. Repeated demands for investigations into previous killings have not yet resulted in any prosecutions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite repeated government pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Many paramilitary groups have their origins in the civilian "self-defence" squads which the army created in the 1980s to act as auxiliaries during counter-insurgency operations. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for their formation 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, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has made repeated promises, both during his election campaign and since taking office, to improve the human rights situation. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of community leader *Ciro Reyes* on 27 November 1994 at his home in the Santa Clara district of Ocaña, Norte de Santander;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into the killing, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern that, despite the continued killing of popular leaders in Ocaña, no apparent steps have been taken by the authorities to find out who is responsible and bring them to justice and urging that all possible

measures be taken to protect the lives of Ocaña's popular leaders;
 - urging that the government should immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of, or with the complicity of, the armed forces, and that members of such forces responsible for human rights violations be brought to justice.

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 7434/287 7939

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 Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723/281 7531

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

3) Attorney General

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

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

Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939 or 288 2828

Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

4) Advocate for the People:

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

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

Faxes:+ 57 1 288 6683/346 1225

Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Alternative Legal Association

MINGA

AA 40303

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 20 January 1995.