

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 433/94 Possible Extrajudicial Execution/Fear for Safety 7 December 1994

COLOMBIA Aleixir OROZCO HERNÁNDEZ, aged 16
Farm workers in Bajo Simacota region

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of civilians living in the Bajo Simacota region of Santander department, after receiving reports of human rights violations by army counter-insurgency forces, including the killing of Aleixir Orozco Hernández and the serious intimidation of local farm workers.

Witnesses describe how on 26 November 1994, 16 year-old Aleixir Orozco was detained in the community of Vizcaina Alta, Bajo Simacota, by soldiers who were wearing the uniform of the counter-insurgency forces. He was shot dead in his underwear and then reportedly dressed in military-style uniform as though he were a guerrilla killed in a confrontation with the army. Aleixir Orozco's body was taken by the military without authorization from his family and buried in a different municipality.

In the Caño Peruetano community, Sábana de Torres municipality, Bajo Simacota, farm workers who have denounced human rights violations by armed forces personnel in the region have reportedly been threatened and harassed. Soldiers from the "Los Guanes" battalion, part of the counter-insurgency Mobile Brigade No 2, *Brigada Móvil No. 2*, reportedly accused the farmworkers of being "guerrillas and guerrilla auxiliaries", "*guerrilleros y auxiliares de la guerrilla*", and confiscated identity documents necessary to move around in this heavily-militarized region. The soldiers threatened some of the men by saying that if they survived them, they would not survive the paramilitary group known as "The Chainsaws", "*Las Motosierras*", who would follow them. This paramilitary group, known for the savage manner in which it kills its victims, is believed to be responsible for the deaths of more than 27 people in the region.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite repeated government pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian and security forces together with 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 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 clear 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 grave concern at the reported killing of 16-year-old Aleixir Orozco on 26 November 1994 in Vizcaina Alta, Bajo Simacota by counter-insurgency soldiers;

- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into the killing, the results of which should be made public and those found responsible brought to justice;
- expressing further concern at the serious intimidation of farm workers in the Caño Peruetano community, Sábana de Torres municipality, Bajo Simacota by counter-insurgency soldiers and urging an immediate and thorough investigation into the threats, particularly into possible links with local paramilitary groups;
- urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives of civilians living in areas of internal conflict;
- 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) Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874/288 4906

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Commander of 2nd Mobile Brigade

Brigadier General Agustín Ardila Uribe
 Comandante Brigada Móvil No. 2
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia

Telegrams:Comandante Brigada Móvil No 1, Ministerio Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes:42411 INPRE CO
44561 CFAC CO
Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874
Salutation:Estimado Comandante/Dear sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace
Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz
AA 31861
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.