

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 47/93 Fear of "disappearance"/fear of torture

24 February 1993

COLOMBIA: José Arquímedes BELTRAN BEJARANO, aged 37

Alvaro MARTINEZ, aged 40

Fabián SARMIENTO, aged 30

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of José Arquímedes Beltrán Bejerano, Alvaro Martínez and Fabián Sarmiento, who have not been seen since 11 February 1993, when witnesses observed their detention by heavily armed men believed to be members of the Colombian security forces, close to the town of Villavicencio, Meta department.

According to information received, the three men, all *campesinos*, peasant farmers, were travelling with another seven people from Villavicencio to the town of Monfort on a public service vehicle, which was stopped at an army control post on the outskirts of Villavicencio. They were held for more than an hour while their identity documents were checked. During this time the soldiers are reported to have made a telephone call to the base of the army's Albán Battalion, Batallón Albán in Villavicencio, reporting that amongst those in the vehicle was a man named Fidel Ortiz, accused by the army of collaborating with guerrillas. However, Fidel Ortiz's only known association with the guerrillas is that they bought food from his shop

After an hour, the vehicle was allowed to go. About one kilometre further on another vehicle, which had reportedly been previously seen parked next to the military control post, overtook and blocked the road, forcing the public service vehicle to stop. Witnesses state that six heavily-armed men got out and forced the passengers to leave the vehicle and lie on the ground. José Arquímedes Beltrán Bejerano, Alvaro Martínez and Fabián Sarmiento were then forced into the second vehicle and taken to an unknown destination. It is believed that one of them may have been taken in the mistaken belief that he was Fidel Ortiz. Their whereabouts remain unknown and there is serious concern for their safety.

The vehicle in which they were taken is believed to belong to the security forces' Anti-extortion and Kidnap Unit, Unidad Antiextorsión y Secuestro (UNASE). On 18 February the Colombian Attorney General, Procurador General, announced that his office was bringing disciplinary charges against 150 members of UNASE for abuses including false detention, torture, extrajudicial execution and extortion.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received an increasing number of reports in recent months of human rights violations against members of the civilian population in the department of Meta including arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. This coincides with an escalating offensive by the Colombian armed forces against the armed opposition group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in the area.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of José Arquimedes Beltrán Bejerano, Alvaro Martínez and Fabián Sarmiento following their detention on 11 February 1993 by heavily armed men believed to be members of the Colombian security forces;

- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into their whereabouts;

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- urging that, if in detention, they be humanely treated and allowed access to lawyers and relatives;

- urging that if in detention they be charged with a recognized criminal offence and brought before a competent court or immediately released.

**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 7324, + 57 1 286 7434, + 57 1 287 7937**

**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 34, Carrera 5  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

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

**Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472**

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

4) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff  
Fiscal General  
Fiscalia General

Apartado Aéreo 29855

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

**Faxes:**+ 57 1 287 0939

**Salutation:** Estimado Dr. de Greiff / Dear Dr. de Greiff

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace:

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz

AA 52332

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 7 April 1993.