

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of "Disappearance"/Death Threats

13 March 1991

COLOMBIA

Domingo LEGUIZAMO

Miguel Angel GONZALEZ

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of Domingo Leguizamo, who was last seen on 3 March 1991 in the community of Alto Morrocoy, municipality of La Macarena, Meta department and for the safety of Miguel Angel Gonzalez, who has received threats to his life.

According to eye-witness reports, Domingo Leguizamo was detained by a military patrol on the afternoon of 3 March 1991 and was last seen in its custody. However, the military authorities active in the area have denied his detention and relatives have not been able to establish his whereabouts.

The region in which Domingo Leguizamo "disappeared" has been militarized as a result of the presence of guerrilla groups in the area. Despite some progress in peace talks between several guerrilla groups and the government, there has been a continuation of political violence in several areas of the country. A paramilitary group has reportedly been active in this area and local people claim the group has been intimidating and harassing civilians living there, especially community leaders. Local people claim to have seen military patrols working with members of this paramilitary group and claim that the army have made no effort to stop their activities. There is particular concern for the safety of community leader Miguel Angel González, who has received threats to his life from this paramilitary group.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although the Colombian government removed the legal basis of paramilitary forces in 1989, such groups continue to operate with virtual impunity, particularly in heavily militarized areas. The Colombian government claims it is unable to control such groups. However independent investigations, including judicial inquiries, have concluded that many such groups operate under the command or with the support of the Colombian armed forces.

In recent months, Amnesty International has become seriously concerned at the increasing number of reports of killings of non-combatant civilians during counter-insurgency operations. The majority of attacks on non-combatant civilians occur in rural areas placed under tight military control as a result of guerrilla activity. Some appear to be largely indiscriminate attacks against whole communities, targetted for their perceived (left-wing) political allegiances. In several other cases, however, torture, "disappearances" and killings of non-combatant civilians appear to be carried out in direct reprisal for guerrilla attacks against army personnel with the apparent intention of intimidating the civilian population.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the possible "disappearance" of Domingo Leguizamo in circumstances suggesting official involvement and urging that there be an immediate investigation to establish his whereabouts;

- urging that if in detention, his legal status be clarified and he be immediately released unless charged with a recognisable criminal offence and that he be allowed access to relatives and a lawyer;

- also expressing concern for the safety of Miguel Angel González following the threats made against his life and urging that there be an investigation in order to identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

APPEALS TO

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

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

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Dr. Gustavo Arrieta
Procurador General de la Nación
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Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

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General Oscar Botero Restrepo
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: +57 1 222 2401

COPIES TO:

Señores
CINEP
AA 25916
Bogotá, Colombia

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz
AA 52332
Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 April 1991.