

PRIORITY

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: AMR 23/54/91
Distr: UA/SC**

UA 323/91

Fear of Torture/"Disappearance"

2 October 1991

COLOMBIA:

**Armando CARDENAS
Omar DUQUE**

Amnesty International is concerned for the physical safety of Armando Cárdenas, who has not been seen since 28 September 1991 and Omar Duque, who has not been seen since 17 September 1991.

According to reports, Armando Cárdenas was detained on 28 September on a farm in the municipality of Simocata, Santander department, by an army patrol accompanied by some civilians, recognized by members of the local community as members of a paramilitary group whose centre of operations is San Juan Bosco de la Verde, Simacota. The same patrol who reportedly detained Armando Cárdenas were seen in the region later in the day, but he was no longer with them and his whereabouts remain unknown. Since 10 September the army's counter-insurgency battalion No. 14 "Palagua", *Batallón de Contrainsurgencia No. 14 "Palagua"* has been carrying out military operations in the area.

For the last six years Armando Cárdenas had been receiving threats to his life from members of the armed forces and paramilitary groups, and had been warned to leave the region. Three members of his family have been killed or "disappeared" - his son Ramiro, aged 16, was killed on 4 June 1987, his son-in-law Gilberto Contreras "disappeared" on 15 January 1989 and his son José Alfredo, aged 28, was killed on 14 January 1991.

Omar Duque was last seen on 17 September when he too was reportedly detained by an army patrol whilst working on a farm in Puerto Argilio, Simacota, during military operations carried out by the "Palagua" battalion. His whereabouts remain unknown. Amnesty International is very concerned for the safety of both men.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The largely rural area of the Magdalena Medio, where Simacota is situated, has been a focus of political violence for several years following the emergence of guerrilla groups in the 1960s and subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. Despite the progress that has been made through peace talks between several of the guerrilla groups and the government, there has been a continuation of political violence. In areas where guerrilla forces are active, the local population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and paramilitary forces.

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

- expressing concern at the possible "disappearance" of Armando Cárdenas and Omar Duque, following their reported detention by members of the Colombian armed forces;

- urging that there be an immediate and effective investigation to establish their whereabouts;

- urging that if in detention, their legal situation be clarified and they be immediately released unless charged with a recognizably criminal offence and that they be allowed access to a lawyer and relatives;

- urging that they be humanely treated whilst in detention.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo **Excelentísimo**
 Presidente de la República **Sr. Presidente**
 Palacio de Nariño

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066; + 57 1 286 7324

+ 57 1 287 7937

Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda **Sr Ministro**

Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla **Sr. Procurador Gral**
 Procurador General de la Nación **de la Nación**

Procuraduría General

Edificio Banco Ganadero

Carrera 5, No. 15-80

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

COPIES TO:

Señores

CINEP

AA 25916

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Justicia y Paz

AA 52332

Santa Fe de 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 13 November 1991.