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# **COLOMBIA**

## **A further exchange of views with the Colombian government**

December 1991  
AI Index: AMR 23/69/91  
Distr: SC/CO/PO

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED  
KINGDOM**

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**DECEMBER 1991**

**SUMMARY**

**AI INDEX: AMR 23/69/91**

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In February 1991 Amnesty International sent a series of recommendations to members of the Colombian Constituent Assembly for Constitutional Reform, (AMR 23/20/91) for the incorporation into the new constitution of comprehensive human rights safeguards in accordance with international standards.

In May 1991 Amnesty International requested and was granted the opportunity to address a plenary session of the Constituent Assembly. In his speech, Amnesty International's Secretary General addressed the role of the Colombian armed forces and the need to include provisions in the new Constitution to establish and regulate their accountability to the constitutionally elected authorities, in view of mounting evidence of armed forces' responsibility for widespread and systematic human rights violations in Colombia. The address provoked a strong reaction from the Minister of the Interior, Humberto de la Calle Lombana, who defended the government's commitment to human rights. In July 1991 Amnesty International returned a written response to the Minister's criticisms of the Secretary General's speech and also raised further concerns (AMR 23/37/91).

This document contains a further exchange of views with the Colombian authorities. In August a letter was received from the Minister of the Interior, again criticising Amnesty International for giving a "false picture" of the human rights situation in Colombia and denying government responsibility for paramilitary activity. In December 1991 the

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Secretary General wrote to the Colombian president, César Gaviria Trujillo, expressing Amnesty International's continuing concern at the human rights situation in Colombia. The letter, in addition to welcoming measures taken by the government to improve the investigation of human rights violations, expressed grave concern that so far these measures have produced few concrete results. The letter gives examples of particular cases of human rights violation, including "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution, which have taken place since the introduction of the human rights safeguards in the new constitution of July 1991 and expresses concern that those responsible for human rights violations have not been brought to justice. Amnesty International also makes clear its appreciation of the difficult situation of public order in Colombia created by the continuing guerrilla offensive which has caused widespread damage and civilian casualties. However the Secretary General points out that abuses by armed opposition groups can never be used to justify human rights violations by the armed forces or paramilitary forces working with their acquiescence. Finally, the letter expresses continuing concern that although paramilitary organizations have been made illegal, little action has been taken to dismantle them and such forces continue to commit abuses with impunity.

**KEYWORDS:** AI AND GOVERNMENTS / INVESTIGATION OF ABUSES / IMPUNITY / CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE / POLITICAL VIOLENCE / NON-GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES / DRUG TRAFFICKING / DISAPPEARANCES / EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTION / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / PEASANTS / COMMUNITY WORKERS / WOMEN / CHILDREN / FAMILIES / FORCIBLE RECRUITMENT / MILITARY / PARAMILITARIES /

This report summarizes a 34-page document (14,112 words), *Colombia: A further exchange of views with the colombian government* (AI Index: AMR 23/69/91), issued by Amnesty International in December 1991. Anyone wanting further details or to take action on this issue should consult the full document.

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## A further exchange of views with the Colombian government

Translation from Spanish of letter to the Secretary General of Amnesty International from the Colombian Minister of the Interior, Dr. Humberto de la Calle Lombana

Santa Fe de Bogotá, 28 August 1991

Dear Mr Martin,

The Colombian government observes with interest and respect the action of international organizations who are fighting to defend human rights throughout the world and has a high opinion of Amnesty International's activities. We are aware of your untiring efforts to denounce human rights violations committed by dictators, which have cast a shadow over Latin American democracy or by the totalitarian states in Eastern Europe which have now become part of the international democratic community. Although past reports by Amnesty International have contained errors of judgement concerning our country, or have been based on insufficiently well documented information, we attributed these shortcomings to the problems faced in adequately analysing a situation as complex as the Colombian one, or to inaccurate impressions created by those within the country who were denouncing violations of certain rights.

After the government, whose resources are limited and which has to face a multiplicity of problems, had made such substantial efforts in recent months to improve conditions for the

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protection of human rights, it was, to say the least, a disagreeable surprise to hear, in your speech of 27 May, together with opinions and points of view that we may all share, a series of unilateral, biased statements, ignoring evident facts and situations.

This speech, with the lack of exactitude of its statements, lack of a precise time span to which they refer and the use of generalisations turning individual events into overall situations, led to a series of conclusions which give a false picture of our national reality. In fact we found it inadmissible that "official responsibility" should be attributed to the activities of paramilitary groups and, above all, that it should be suggested that these forces "have formed an integral part of a programme of counter-insurgency adopted by the Colombian armed forces". Thus, either through lack of precision or deliberate intent, the image presented is one of criminal acts being committed by civilian organizations against opposition group activists as part of an official armed forces policy and, therefore, of the present government. Facts contradicting this view are either ignored, or presented, as in the case of the 1989 decrees rendering self-defence groups illegal, as a simple recognition of responsibility rather than as an action taken against them.

In summary, the view presented in your speech of 27 May, which provoked my response in the Constituent Assembly and even the reaction by groups such as the M-19 which have been victims of serious acts of violence, is that of a government which is formally committed to defending human rights, but which encourages or tolerates their violation. Your speech presents a country which is subject to an increasingly worrying growth in violations: you speak of "thousands of extrajudicial executions" - a phrase whose ambiguity seems to suggest that these executions are, directly or indirectly, the responsibility of agents of the state. Thus the recognition that there have been victims from all political groups is purely formal and even your mention of the fact that guerrilla groups are committing "serious abuses" serves rather as an indication that these abuses are used by the government as excuses for "ordering or tolerating" human rights violations by government forces.

In our opinion there are many passages in your speech which create a distorted picture of our national reality. But there are two aspects which are worth emphasizing and which were reiterated in your latest letter. In the first place, your speech does not take into account the role of the government in developing a human rights protection policy. An obvious example is the lack of any reference to the government's proposals to the Constituent Assembly, in spite of the fact that a large number of the proposals sent by Amnesty International, such as those concerning the independence of the Public Ministry, or the introduction of specific protection procedures and measures, or the speedier drafting of a bill of rights, coincided with the proposals made by the government several months before. In addition, the adoption of various measures to reinforce the protection of citizen's rights - such as a reduction in preventive detention, the extension of legal regulations on habeas corpus, authorisation given to the Red Cross to visit detainees - did not merit even a brief mention.

In this way, the image of the government's action is necessarily one-sided and only its shortcomings and inadequacies are presented. As your statement aims to give an overall view of the Colombian situation and a political analysis of action on human rights violations, this omission reveals a one-sided attitude. The government believes it is making serious efforts to improve human rights protection for Colombians and therefore cannot accept that the violations which are still occurring in the country or the impunity which covers those responsible are the result of the government's will or of a policy of using crime as part of its anti-guerrilla or anti-crime strategy.

Secondly, your latest letter persists in that view, stating that Amnesty International believes, "based on overwhelming evidence, that paramilitary forces form an integral part of a counter-insurgency program adopted by the Colombian armed forces designed to eliminate real or perceived opponents". We do not believe in the existence of such conclusive proof, since the most that can be used in this sense are legal regulations and events which took place prior to 1989, or generalisations based on rarely documented evidence that some acts by certain groups are currently being committed with the possible help or complicity of State agents. On the contrary, we believe that what has been proved conclusively is that the government and our military command reject the actions of paramilitary groups and that efforts are being made by the government to ensure that those who break the law in supporting the action of armed civil groups are punished.

Amnesty International must take into account – in order to understand the evolution of the struggle against the paramilitary groups – the political circumstances which have unfolded in our country since September 1990, when members of such groups were offered, if there were no legal proceedings against them other than for the illegal possession of arms, the chance to give themselves up and receive favourable treatment. As part of this policy, hundreds of peasants who had links with these groups handed over their weapons, and peace was re-established in some of the areas where the so-called paramilitary had attained some measure of influence. In general, in spite of Amnesty International's statements, criminal actions attributable to groups described as "paramilitary" have seriously diminished. Massacres of peasants have occurred less frequently, as have assassinations of political leaders, and regions like Magdalena Medio, Urabá or Sinú have begun to reach relative peace.

For the government it is essential, in the light of its policies, to continue reducing acts of violence against left-wing groups and the guerrillas, and the fact that the political activities of new parties which have arisen from guerrilla groups have been able to take place this year against a backdrop of respect for the lives of such citizens, is one result we can point to with satisfaction. Paramilitary groups which are still carrying out actions and whose potential to become active again is of concern to the government, cannot claim any way that their objectives match those of the State – on the contrary, they treat the latter as their enemy and

hinder it in its strategies – even though there may be occasional cases of collusion between State agents and criminal groups, inaction, negligence or tolerance on the part of some local authorities, and despite the fact that the government does not have the resources to confront guerrilla or paramilitary groups carrying out armed political violence head on and immediately defeat them.

The government believes that, in addition to the measures that the Executive can adopt to reduce human rights violations and reduce acts of political violence, outstanding among which is progress in peace negotiations, which is not mentioned by Amnesty International either, it is essential to reduce impunity over violations of rights. Because of this, it is surprising to see your complaint about the extension of the powers of the courts in punishing the activities of "opposition groups and criminal organizations". In the first place, we believe that it is clear to Amnesty International that the only activities of opposition groups which are punished are those concerning unlawful acts of guerrilla warfare. But what is more important than this is that the government strongly believes that it is precisely the legal system's powers to punish those who violate rights of Colombians which must be strengthened. We know that the courts currently are not managing to solve the majority of cases passed to them.

Both in the civil courts, which are charged with investigating and trying most cases of "disappearances", "extra-judicial executions" and politically motivated homicides which occur in Colombia, and in the military courts, the number of convictions is far too small. This impunity, as we all know, encourages new violations and must be reduced. For this reason the government has tried, against the opinion of human rights defence groups who consider that there is a serious risk that judges and courts may act unfairly against the defendants, to drastically strengthen the independence and security of members of the judicial system. The Statute for the Defense of Justice and the radical reform of the judicial system approved by the Constitution, are examples of this. We cannot deny, however, that overcoming such impunity will be a slow process. The government cannot interfere with legal decisions and knows that these are taken with limited resources which have been overwhelmed by the drug-trafficking crime wave of the past decade. Because of this most sanctions for human rights violations have been made either by the Procurator General or by disciplinary bodies which come under the Executive. These are, however, restricted by the lightness of the sanctions available to them. The Executive cannot overrule, as some wish, the power of the judiciary and impose drastic sentences and, in many cases, it must accept lighter administrative sanctions. Neither can it, in applying administrative sanctions, violate the principles of due process, and it knows that any dismissal on the basis of charges which are not properly demonstrated may be revoked by the administrative courts. In this situation, when the government is making the most vigorous efforts to strengthen the legal system, the existence of high levels of impunity cannot be interpreted as proof of the State's desire to protect those acting in a criminal manner. Whenever there have been signs that State agents

have acted illegally, the government has taken steps to ensure that the relevant court proceedings be set in motion, it has requested that investigations be made on the case and has tried to ensure that these do not fail. The strengthening of intelligence units, both military and civil, and their training and their heightened provision of technology, instead of representing risks to citizens, may lead to a reduction in impunity and an increase in the State's ability to impart justice and satisfy judicially victims of acts of violence. It may also lessen the reasons which have driven so many Colombians to tolerate or encourage methods of private justice and illegal retaliation.

With regard to the National Strategy against Violence, I would like to make the following comments:

The above mentioned Strategy recognises that the current violence is the product of different forms of violence affecting Colombians which have specific regional manifestations: "the wide range of current violence in the country includes political violence caused by guerrilla organizations in actions against the State and civilian population; violence linked to conflicts of a social nature; violence and intimidation against groups or persons because they belong to certain political tendencies, carried out by private justice groups or the so-called paramilitary; that of a socio-cultural nature carried out against ethnic minorities; common crime and forms of individual and widespread criminality; organised crime and hired killers, which covers violence perpetrated by the criminal networks fuelling drug-terrorism, and the violence itself of the drug trade, which is carried out to intimidate the judiciary, the State and society, eliminate rivals, settle matters regarding profits of the trade, shore up criminal activities and exercise geographical hegemony and, finally, violence related to the violation of Human Rights by members of State organizations who acting as individuals, in specific cases and contrary to applicable institutional norms, exceed their authority in the exercise of keeping public order"<sup>1</sup>

In the face of this spiral of violence the Strategy is conceived as an integral government policy. This means that the five areas of action which it covers cannot be considered in isolation from the document as a whole. This is concerned with three concrete objectives aimed at reducing the afore-mentioned forms of violence in the country:

- 1) To guarantee that the monopoly for the use of force is in the hands of armed State institutions, in accordance with the constitutional mandate.
- 2) To return to the legal system its ability to punish crime and combat impunity.
- 3) To extend coverage of the State's institutions throughout the national territory.

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<sup>1</sup> National Strategy against Violence (NSV), page 8



These three major proposals are expressed in a human rights policy reflecting the clear and unequivocal commitment of the Colombian government to safeguard these rights, as you yourself acknowledge in your letter. In fact the entire National Strategy against Violence is carefully developing these principles and even has a chapter which particularly reinforces this commitment.<sup>2</sup> For greater clarity it is worth pointing out some of the specific measures proposed:

- 1) To reinforce the internal control procedures of the State institutions.
- 2) To strengthen the control procedures utilized by the Procurator General.
- 3) To extend human rights education programmes for civil servants, particularly municipal ombudsmen, judicial police employees and members of the armed forces and the police.
- 4) To improve methods for reporting and investigating cases of violations through the municipal ombudsmen, the Procurator General, the Director of National Criminal Instruction, the office of the Presidential Adviser on Human Rights and civil, military and police authorities.
- 5) To authorize the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit all detainees in the country.
- 6) To formulate procedures for dealing speedily with cases of "disappearances", with the collaboration of the Director of National Criminal Instruction, the Procurator General, the Department of Forensic Medicine and police investigation units.
- 7) For the National Government, to present an annual report on the human rights situation in Colombia.

The active policy for the protection of fundamental human rights must be accompanied by more efficient action by the Forces of Public Order and the judiciary to confront violence. For this reason the Strategy establishes that: "Policies designed to strengthen the capacity of the legal system - its reform, the improvement of its investigation procedures and the strengthening of security forces - will make it possible to eradicate impunity, which is essential to the proper preservation and defence of human rights".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> NSV, the Defence and Protection of Human Rights, a Government Priority, page 43

<sup>3</sup> NSV, page 43

Like other countries, the Colombian government considers that in order to fight crime in all its manifestations, it must strengthen its intelligence services. The Government considers that the Forces of Public Order and their security bodies as a whole must have greater investigative powers if they are to deal with crime efficiently and ensure the exercise by citizens of full rights and public safety. This means that the Strategy is not exclusively restricted to strengthening military intelligence, but rather all state intelligence instruments.

Furthermore, the government respectfully disagrees with your opinion that strengthening intelligence would mean increasing cases of human rights violations.

In addition to the above-mentioned controls, the Strategy contains plans for specific methods of civil control over the state intelligence system to ensure that possible excesses in this area do not occur:<sup>4</sup>

- 1) The establishment of a special Presidential Committee to manage and co-ordinate national intelligence.
- 2) The restructuring of the National Intelligence Board and of the Intelligence Section Boards with the aim of making co-ordination between civil and military authorities with intelligence functions more fluid.
- 3) The creation at regional level of Anti-extorsion and Kidnapping Units Evaluation Committees, made up of the Forces of Public Order, the DAS, the Regional Procurator's Offices and civilian section authorities.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Strategy aims to combat, inter alia, private justice groups. The fact is that a specific chapter on this phenomenon is not contained in the document does not mean that the government is ignoring it. In fact the fights against private justice groups is of such importance that it is given special treatment throughout the Strategy.

The policy of strengthening the legal system to which the government is committed forsee the development of means of combatting impunity and, as a consequence, eliminating all forms of private justice. Progress is being made, inter alia, on the following means:

- 1) The creation of an Public Attorney General's office, in accordance with the Constitution and a corresponding strengthening of the State's investigative abilities.

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<sup>4</sup> NSV, page 34

<sup>5</sup> NSV, Action on extorsion and kidnapping, page 41

2) The establishment of a policy of submission to justice, with the aim of returning to it its ability to pass sentence and punish crimes relating to terrorism and drug-trafficking, as well as private justice groups<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, regional security plans will have a specific effect on this phenomenon's regional manifestations. The formulation of these plans by each Department in the country is based on the need to restore civil, sectional and local authority for the management of public order and to establish co-ordination procedures among the Forces of Public Order and state security bodies and the people. Through the Sectional Security Councils the regions will design the programmes needed either to combat each specific kind of violence affecting their security or to keep the peace where this has not been disturbed.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth remembering that the Strategy establishes some basic guidelines for the formulation of these plans, including:

"5) To establish procedures to offer full guarantees and supervise the protection of the population's human rights."

"9) To create wider and more reliable channels through which the people can effectively monitor public security and the behaviour of the various bodies and agents involved in regional security plans."

As you can see, the National Strategy against Violence does lay down precise plans for dismantling private justice organizations. It is a mistake to conclude that just one State body is in charge of formulating plans to counteract this phenomenon. This is an effort for which the whole State and the citizenry are responsible in fulfilment of our integrated policy. For this same reason it must be understood that the government's policies are being carried out harmoniously by the entire Forces of Public Order as well as by all the State institutions involved in the Strategy.

The Colombian government clearly understands the principles on which Amnesty International bases its action and the reasons why which it focusses its action on the State's responsibility vis-à-vis the violation of human rights. But, as this letter makes clear, it does not believe that responsibility for the existence of specific policies of criminal use of State authority can be equated with responsibilities deriving from the restrictions faced by the State

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<sup>6</sup> NSV, the policy of submission to justice requires criminals to give themselves up voluntarily and confess, page 22

<sup>7</sup> NSV page 6

in imposing full respect for the law within the national territory, particularly when the government is providing unquestionable proof of its decision to achieve, by all means at its disposal, full respect for the rights of its citizens. If these efforts have not yet produced full results, it does not mean that the government can be held directly responsible for acts of violence committed by armed groups, whether guerrillas or "paramilitary", unless proof can be provided that these acts had the tacit approval or direct support of the state authorities.

I hope that these comments, whilst not exhausting the matters contained in your statements and letters, will give your organization a fuller view of the situation in Colombia. I believe that, in spite of everything, your most recent letter restates some of the one-sided or simplistic points of view in your speech to the Constituent Assembly. This does not hamper in any way our interest in all forms of dialogue with organizations such as Amnesty International and with all those fighting for increased respect for human rights.

Yours sincerely

**Signed by the Minister of the Interior**

## Written response to President César Gaviria Trujillo

Your Excellency  
Dr. César Gaviria  
President of the Republic  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santafé de Bogotá  
COLOMBIA

26 November 1991

Dear President Gaviria,

I should like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the time made available to myself and my colleagues by members of your government during our visit to Bogotá in May and the spirit of cooperation in which we were received. I am well aware that our visit took place at an extremely demanding time both for your government and the Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, and we very much appreciated your willingness to receive the delegation and the serious attention given to our discussions. I was particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to meet you again and through our discussions to develop a clearer understanding of your government's appreciation of the human rights situation.

We also valued the opportunity for lengthy discussions with your advisers Jorge Orlando Melo and Rafael Pardo, with the Ministers of Justice and Interior, the National Director of Police and officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, among others. The discussions left us with a clearer appreciation of the actual context in which human rights violations are occurring and of the initiatives which have been introduced, or planned, designed to eliminate the widespread practices of violations of basic human rights, including "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions.

We were particularly interested to learn of recent initiatives taken to establish mechanisms and structures, both national and regional, to improve investigative procedures, including the mechanisms introduced by the National Directorate of Criminal Instruction to facilitate investigations of politically motivated crimes and to break the cycle of impunity of police or armed forces' personnel who perpetrate political crimes of torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial executions. The introduction by the NDCI of a centralized register of information in order to facilitate the identification of bodies of murder victims, frequently

buried as "NN", could be an important first step towards discovering the whereabouts of some of the persons reported as "disappeared". We would hope that these procedures would not stop with the identification of the bodies but would lead to vigorous steps being taken to determine the circumstances of death and to investigate and prosecute those responsible. We were also interested to learn in more detail of the efforts to strengthen the procedures of control exercised by the Procurator General over judicial investigations of human rights violations.

Since our visit we have had an interesting and useful exchange of correspondence with the Minister of Interior, Dr Humberto de la Calle Lombana, in which he has provided us with further details of the government's assessment of the human rights situation and has informed us of further developments which could also contribute towards enhancing respect for fundamental human rights, including the lifting of the state of siege, imposed in 1984, and the creation within the new Constitution of the office of the Defensor del Pueblo. We will be following with interest the impact these and other developments have on the human rights situation in the coming months.

While AI welcomes the measures undertaken by your government to improve respect for fundamental human rights and your government's efforts to publicly legitimize the defence of human rights, it is a matter of grave concern that these measures have so far had little or no apparent impact on the level of human rights violations, and serious abuses have continued. Since our visit in May, AI has received an increasing number of reports of extrajudicial executions allegedly committed by members of the Colombian armed forces and of a series of abuses attributed to paramilitary forces, particularly in the Magdalena Medio region of the country.

We are aware that the renewed escalation in human rights violations in recent months has in part coincided with an offensive by the armed groups of the Coordinara Nacional Guerrillera Simón Bolívar in which substantial damage has been caused to economic targets and in which both military personnel and civilians have been killed. We have also been concerned to learn that the renewed guerrilla offensive has included deliberate and apparently premeditated attacks against senior members of the Liberal Party and other politicians campaigning for Congressional election. Responsibility for an attack in Cauca department on 30 September against the former president of Congress, Aurelio Iragorri Hormaza, in which seven people in his company were killed, has reportedly been admitted by the ELN. AI opposes and condemns abuses by opposition groups, including the taking of hostages, the torture and killing of prisoners and other arbitrary killings and appreciates the particularly difficult public order situation escalating military actions by the CNGSB have created. Nevertheless, as we agreed in our meeting, abuses by members of armed opposition groups can never provide justification for government forces to deliberately kill defenceless

people and it is precisely in situations of armed conflict that fundamental human rights must be protected with extra vigilance.

Indeed, the principal victims of the wave of human rights violations in recent weeks were not members of active armed opposition groups. Many were associated with legal left-wing political parties such as the Patriotic Union and Communist Party, or were community or peasant leaders or were members of recently disbanded guerrilla organizations such as the EPL. (Ejército Popular de Liberación)

According to reports received by Amnesty International, on 20 June 1991, Benedicto Cubides was detained by members of the Luciano D'Eluyer and Nueva Granada battalions of the Colombian army in the vereda Rancho Chile, Bajo Simacota in the municipality of Simacota, Santander department. The following day the military patrol was seen leaving the area taking with them a bound and hooded prisoner. As all too frequently happens in these cases, military authorities have reportedly denied Benedicto Cubides' detention and his whereabouts remain unknown. Benedicto Cubides, who is a member of the regional branch of the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos, had only recently returned to the region after having fled as a result of death threats.

Alonso Lara Martinez, secretary of the Communal Action Group (Junta de Acción Comunal) in Sabana de Torres, Santander department, and Luz Marina Villabona, Alonso Lara's wife and Secretary of Police Inspection in Sabaneta, both Unión Patriótica activists, were reportedly detained, tortured and extrajudicially executed by soldiers from the army's Battalion Guanes on 29 July 1991. Claims by General Carlos Gil Colorado, Commander of the V Brigade in Bucaramanga, that they were members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) killed in combat have been refuted by eye-witnesses who have testified that the couple were taken by soldiers from their home, tortured and then shot. The bodies reportedly showed signs of having been tortured and several bullet wounds and the clothes they were wearing when detained had been changed for military style clothes in an apparent attempt to distort the circumstances of their deaths.

Similar claims by military commanders that victims of apparent extrajudicial executions were killed in combat have also been refuted in the case of the killings of seven people in Fusagasugá. According to information received by Amnesty International, early in the morning of 18 August 1991 about 30 soldiers travelling in two trucks arrived at the home of Antonio Palacios Urrea in Los Comuneros, a suburb of the town of Fusagasugá, Cundinamarca department. According to eye-witnesses, the men surrounded the house and entered it from several directions. They then opened fire on the occupants of the house killing Antonio Palacios Urrea, a member of the UP, three of his children, Blanca Cecilia, Janeth and Camilo and Janeth's husband, Rodrigo Elías Barrera Vanegas. Two other men, whose identity is not yet clear, were also found dead at the entrance to the house. A military

communiqué issued by the Commander of the XIII Brigade of the Colombian Army alleged that the seven people killed were members of an armed opposition group who had been killed during a confrontation with the troops. Weapons purportedly found in the house were also shown to members of the press. However, this version of events was contradicted by eye-witness reports and the findings of police and journalists who visited the scene shortly afterwards who apparently found no evidence that the people inside the house had fired on their attackers. Indeed, from the account of the attack given by the only adult survivor, María Belarmina Romero, the five members of her family were shot through the back of the head after being made to lie face down on the floor. We understand that in September, military investigating court No 115 (Juzgado 115 de Instrucción Penal Militar) issued arrest warrants against a second-lieutenant (sub-teniente), a sergeant and five privates from the army's Artillery School, attached to the XIII Brigade, in connection with the killings. We will monitor closely developments in the investigation of the extrajudicial execution of members of the Palacios family and would appreciate being kept informed of progress in the case. We are seriously concerned, however, by reports that witnesses to the killing, including María Belarmina Palacios and the lawyer representing her, Dr Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, have all been subject to repeated death threats in recent weeks. We have heard from Dr Jorge Orlando Melo and from Dr Umaña Mendoza that on learning of the threats against him, the authorities took measures to safeguard his immediate physical integrity. However, threats against him have continued. We would urge that all possible measures are taken to protect all witnesses to human rights violations and to ensure that human rights lawyers and workers are able to conduct their professional activities without fear of reprisal or intimidation. The protection of witnesses to human rights violations, and safeguards for professionals and others who seek to assist them, is a crucial element in the fight against impunity.

We will be observing with interest the progress of the investigations into the reported extrajudicial executions detailed above, to see if the full truth emerges and if all those responsible, including those who gave the orders for human rights violations to be committed, are identified and brought to justice.

We will also be observing the results of these investigations with particular attention in order to monitor the implementation of any sentences imposed by the courts. While Amnesty International takes no position on the granting of official amnesties or pardons once the truth about the individual abuses has been brought to light through investigations and those responsible have been convicted, we have received information in a number of cases suggesting that perpetrators of human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions and "disappearances", are remaining unpunished through the failure of the competent authorities to enforce the rulings of the courts. The failure to implement the sanctions imposed by the courts could detract from the Colombian Government's efforts to improve the public's confidence in the judicial process and could also contribute to the



commission of further human rights violations by encouraging a sense of impunity. One case which illustrates apparent de facto amnesties is the trial and conviction "in absentia" of twelve leaders and members of paramilitary forces, and civilian authorities who supported them, for a series of multiple killings in Urabá in 1988. Since the sentence was issued, two of those convicted have been killed in circumstances which remain unclear. As far as we are aware none of the remaining convicted persons, including the former mayor of Puerto Boyacá, has so far been captured and imprisoned. From our discussions, I know that you are firmly convinced of the importance of breaking the cycle of impunity in Colombia and your government's view was again confirmed by Minister de la Calle in his letter of 28 August. I would, therefore, respectfully urge you to take urgent measures to ensure that those found responsible for human rights violations are held fully accountable before the law.

Amnesty International believes that the phenomenon of impunity is one of the main contributing factors to the continuing pattern of human rights violations. Bringing the perpetrators of human rights violations to justice is not only important in respect of the individual case, but also sends a clear message that violations of human rights will not be tolerated and that those who commit such acts will be held fully accountable. When perpetrators are not held to account, a self-perpetuating cycle of violence is set in motion resulting in continuing violations of human rights cloaked by impunity. Efforts made to end impunity provide a crucial indicator by which a government's political will to ensure respect for human rights can be measured.

During our discussions in Santafé de Bogotá in May, members of your government repeatedly expressed to us their concern at the reactivation of paramilitary forces in the first few months of the year. As I commented in my letter to Minister de la Calle, AI remains seriously concerned that the government's policy document, the National Strategy against Violence, contains no specific and precise strategy to combat paramilitary organizations and ensure their dismantlement. We were, therefore, pleased to see from Minister de la Calle's response that the Colombian Government shares our concern about the need to combat and dismantle such forces. The need to take urgent and decisive action against paramilitary forces responsible for numerous human rights violations is reinforced by reports that in recent weeks there has again been a resurgence in their activities.

According to recent information received by AI, paramilitary forces, based in San Juan Bosco La Verde, have been responsible for numerous abuses against members of local communities in the region of San Vicente de Chucuri, Santander department. The abuses reportedly include the levying of taxes on the local community in order to raise money for equipment and arms and the enforced recruitment of members of local communities to participate in paramilitary activities, during which they may be compelled not only to confront guerrilla forces, but also to commit human rights violations against non-combatant civilians. Civilians who refuse to collaborate have reportedly been subject to reprisals

including threats, harassment and killings. Paramilitary leaders reportedly claim to be operating with the consent and support of regional army commanders and civilian authorities. These claims would appear to be borne out by the fact that although the municipality of San Vicente de Chucuri is heavily militarized, no confrontations are reported to have taken place between regular armed forces and paramilitary groups in the area. Indeed, regular army patrols are frequently accompanied by members of paramilitary forces.

Although, in response to complaints by local inhabitants, regional army commanders have reportedly denied the existence of paramilitary forces in the area, they have pressured peasant farmers to buy weapons provided by the military and to form "self-defence" groups, in apparent contravention of Decree Law 815 of 1989 which suspended legislation (Art. 33 of Law 48 of 1968) empowering the armed forces to provide civilians with military weapons.

Similar reports of a resurgence in paramilitary activities have also been received from the department of Boyacá and, according to a communique recently issued by Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio and reproduced in the national press, paramilitary forces in Puerto Boyacá, Santander department, have announced their intention of resuming their activities of "control y limpieza" against "communists" in the Magdalena Medio. The communique went on to say that their forces had been transferred to the municipalities of Yondó, Antioquia department, Barrancabermeja, Sabana de Torres, El Centro, El Carmen y San Vicente de Chucuri in Santander department.

We would respectfully urge you to renew efforts to fulfil the commitment made in your inaugural address in August 1990 to "vigorously oppose the paramilitary groups by channelling all the efforts of the Colombian State to dismantle these groups which have become powerful criminal organizations responsible for massacres, assassinations of political leaders and all kinds of atrocities" and to regularly issue clear and strongly worded directives to the security forces to adhere to basic principles of international human rights law under all circumstances.

I would like to once again express my appreciation of your government's willingness to listen to and seriously discuss Amnesty International's human rights concerns in Colombia and, at the same time, reiterate our desire to continue our dialogue on issues of mutual concern.

Respectfully and sincerely,

Signed by the Secretary General

Excmo. Sr.  
Dr. César Gaviria  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santafé de Bogotá  
COLOMBIA

TG AMR 23/91.08

Londres, 26 de noviembre de 1991

Excelencia:

En primer lugar, deseo agradecerle el tiempo que los miembros de su gobierno nos dedicaron, a mí y a mis colegas, durante la visita que hicimos en mayo a Santafé de Bogotá, así como por el espíritu de cooperación con que nos recibieron. No se me oculta que esta visita tuvo lugar en un momento apremiante tanto para su gobierno como para la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente, y mucho apreciamos la audiencia que concedió a la delegación y la profunda atención prestada a nuestras conversaciones. Me fue especialmente grata la oportunidad de reunirme nuevamente con el Sr. Presidente y, a través de nuestras discusiones, llegar a adquirir una mayor comprensión de la apreciación que hace su gobierno de la situación de los derechos humanos en Colombia.

También valoramos la oportunidad de mantener prolongadas conversaciones con sus asesores los Dres. Jorge Orlando Melo y Rafael Pardo, con los ministros de Justicia y de Gobierno, con funcionarios de los ministerios de Relaciones Exteriores y de Defensa y con el Director General de Policía Nacional, entre otros. Dichas conversaciones nos permitieron evaluar con mayor claridad el contexto actual en que se insertan las violaciones de derechos humanos en Colombia y las iniciativas tomadas, o previstas, para eliminar la práctica generalizada de violaciones de derechos humanos fundamentales, incluyendo las desapariciones forzadas y las ejecuciones extrajudiciales.

Fue con especial interés que nos enteramos de recientes iniciativas para crear mecanismos y estructuras, tanto nacionales como regionales, con miras a mejorar los procedimientos de investigación. Entre dichas iniciativas se incluyen los mecanismos que la Dirección Nacional de Instrucción Criminal ha creado para facilitar la investigación de delitos por motivos políticos y para romper el ciclo de impunidad que permite que el

personal policial y militar cometa delitos políticos como tortura, desapariciones forzadas y ejecuciones extrajudiciales. El registro centralizado de información que está introduciendo la Dirección Nacional de Instrucción Criminal para facilitar la identificación de las víctimas de homicidios, frecuentemente sepultadas como "N.N.", podría constituir un primer paso importante para descubrir el paradero de algunas de las personas clasificadas como "desaparecidas". Confiamos en que estos procedimientos no se agoten con la identificación de los cadáveres, sino que resulten en la toma de medidas enérgicas para determinar las circunstancias de las muertes e investigar y enjuiciar a los responsables. También fue interesante enterarnos más detalladamente de los esfuerzos hechos para reforzar los procedimientos de control a disposición del Procurador General en relación con la investigación judicial de violaciones de derechos humanos.

Desde la fecha de nuestra visita hemos mantenido un constructivo intercambio de correspondencia con el Ministro de Gobierno Dr. Humberto de la Calle Lombana. El Sr. Ministro nos ha puesto al tanto de la apreciación que hace el gobierno de la situación de los derechos humanos en Colombia, y nos ha dado a conocer recientes medidas que también podrían contribuir a mejorar el respeto por los derechos humanos fundamentales, incluyendo el levantamiento del estado de sitio impuesto en 1984 y la creación, por la nueva Constitución, de la oficina del Defensor del Pueblo. Durante los meses venideros, observaremos atentamente el efecto que estas medidas puedan tener sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en Colombia.

Si bien Amnistía Internacional considera positivas las medidas tomadas por el gobierno del Sr. Presidente para mejorar el respeto por los derechos humanos fundamentales y ve con agrado los esfuerzos del gobierno para legitimar públicamente la defensa de los derechos humanos, es motivo de honda preocupación para la organización que estas medidas no parezcan haber tenido hasta el presente mayor efecto sobre el índice de las violaciones de derechos humanos, y que hayan continuado cometiéndose graves abusos. Desde la visita a Colombia en el mes de mayo, Amnistía Internacional ha recibido una serie de informes sobre ejecuciones extrajudiciales imputadas a miembros de las fuerzas armadas colombianas y abusos atribuidos a fuerzas paramilitares, especialmente en la región del Magdalena Medio.

Somos conscientes de que la nueva escalada de violaciones de derechos humanos registrada en los últimos meses ha coincidido, en parte, con una ofensiva emprendida por los grupos armados de la Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera "Simón Bolívar", ofensiva que ha causado daños económicos de considerable magnitud y se ha cobrado la vida de militares y civiles por igual. Nos ha inquietado enterarnos de que la redoblada actividad guerrillera ha incluido ataques deliberados, y aparentemente premeditados, contra miembros destacados del Partido Liberal y otras figuras políticas participantes en la campaña electoral para el Congreso. Según los informes recibidos, un frente del Ejército

de Liberación Nacional ha reivindicado el atentado perpetrado el 30 de septiembre, en el departamento de Cauca, contra el ex presidente del Congreso Aurelio Iragorri Hormaza, en el que perdieron la vida siete personas que lo acompañaban. Amnistía Internacional condena y se opone a los abusos cometidos por grupos de la oposición, incluyendo la toma de rehenes, la tortura y el homicidio de prisioneros y otros homicidios arbitrarios, y es consciente de que la escalada militar de la Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera ha creado una situación de orden público que resulta especialmente delicada. No obstante, como concordamos durante nuestra reunión, los abusos cometidos por grupos de la oposición armada nunca pueden excusar el homicidio deliberado de civiles desarmados por parte de las fuerzas del gobierno y es, precisamente, en situaciones de conflicto armado que los derechos humanos fundamentales deben ser protegidos con añadido celo.

En los hechos, las principales víctimas de la ola de violaciones de derechos humanos desencadenada en las últimas semanas no han sido miembros de grupos activos de la oposición armada. Muchas de ellas estaban vinculadas con partidos políticos legales de orientación izquierdista, tales como la Unión Patriótica y el Partido Comunista, o eran líderes campesinos o populares, o miembros de organizaciones guerrilleras recientemente desmanteladas, tales como el Ejército Popular de Liberación.

Según los informes recibidos en Amnistía Internacional, el 20 de junio de 1991, miembros de los batallones Luciano D'Eluyer y Nueva Granada del ejército colombiano detuvieron a Benedicto Cubides en la vereda Rancho Chile, en Bajo Simacota, municipalidad de Simacota, departamento de Santander. Al día siguiente, unos testigos vieron cómo la patrulla militar abandonaba la zona llevándose a una persona atada y encapuchada. Como ocurre con harta frecuencia en casos similares, las autoridades militares negaron al parecer todo conocimiento de la detención de Benedicto Cubides, y hasta hoy se desconoce su paradero. Benedicto Cubides, miembro de la sección regional de la Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos, había regresado a la zona recientemente tras haberse ausentado al recibir amenazas de muerte.

Hemos recibido informes de que el 29 de julio de 1991, Alonso Lara Martínez, secretario de la Junta de Acción Comunal de Sabana de Torres, departamento de Santander, y su esposa Luz Marina Villabona, secretaria de la Inspección de Policía de Sabaneta, ambos activistas de la Unión Patriótica, fueron detenidos, torturados y ejecutados extrajudicialmente por soldados que, se cree, pertenecían a la Brigada Móvil Número 2 o al Batallón Guanes. Las declaraciones del comandante de la V Brigada en Bucaramanga, en el sentido de que se trató de miembros de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) muertos durante un enfrentamiento armado, han sido refutadas por testigos presenciales: éstos afirman que los soldados se llevaron a la pareja de su domicilio, la torturaron y a continuación le dieron muerte a tiros. Según parece, los cuerpos presentaban señales de tortura y varias heridas de bala, y las ropas que

vestían en el momento de ser detenidos habían sido sustituidas por otras de estilo militar, en un intento aparente de falsear las circunstancias de su muerte.

Similares declaraciones por comandantes militares, afirmando que las víctimas de aparentes ejecuciones extrajudiciales han perdido la vida en el campo de batalla, también han sido refutadas en el caso del asesinato de siete personas en la localidad de Fusagasugá. Según información recibida por Amnistía Internacional, a primera hora de la mañana del 18 de agosto de 1991 unos 30 soldados llegaron en dos camiones al domicilio de Antonio Palacios Urrea en Los Comuneros, barrio periférico de Fusagasugá, departamento de Cundinamarca. Los testigos presenciales dicen que los hombres rodearon la vivienda y penetraron en ella desde distintas direcciones; a continuación, abrieron fuego contra los ocupantes, dando muerte a Antonio Palacios Urrea, miembro de la Unión Patriótica, a tres de sus hijos, Blanca Cecilia, Janeth y Camilo y a Rodrigo Elías Barrera Vanegas, esposo de Janeth. Otros dos hombres, cuya identidad no ha sido determinada aún, fueron encontrados sin vida en la entrada de la casa. El comandante de la XIII Brigada del ejército manifestó, en un comunicado militar, que las siete víctimas eran miembros de un grupo armado de oposición, asesinados durante un enfrentamiento con elementos castrenses. Las autoridades militares también mostraron a la prensa una serie de armas presuntamente encontradas en la vivienda. Sin embargo, esta versión de los hechos fue contradicha por testigos presenciales, así como por periodistas y agentes de policía que visitaron la escena del tiroteo poco después: éstos, según parece, no encontraron prueba alguna de que la gente de la casa hubiera disparado contra sus agresores. Por el contrario, según el relato del único superviviente adulto, María Belarmina Romero, corroborado por las pruebas forenses disponibles, los soldados obligaron a los cinco miembros de su familia a tenderse boca abajo y les dieron muerte de un tiro en la cabeza. Nos hemos enterado de que en septiembre el Juzgado 115 de Instrucción Penal Militar expidió autos de detención preventiva contra un subteniente, un sargento y cinco soldados de la Escuela de Artillería del ejército, agregada a la XIII Brigada, en relación con estos asesinatos. No obstante, nos causa honda preocupación enterarnos de que en las últimas semanas los testigos de la matanza, incluyendo a María Belarmina Palacios, y el abogado de ésta, Dr. Eduardo Umaña Mendoza, han sido blanco de repetidas amenazas de muerte. Los Dres. Jorge Orlando Melo y Eduardo Umaña Mendoza nos han hecho saber que, al enterarse de las amenazas contra éste último, las autoridades tomaron medidas para garantizar su seguridad inmediata. Las amenazas, sin embargo, han continuado. Nos permitimos pedir que se tomen todas las medidas posibles para proteger a los testigos de violaciones de derechos humanos y para asegurar que los abogados y activistas de derechos humanos puedan desempeñar sus actividades profesionales sin temor a ser objeto de represalias o a ser intimidados. La protección de los testigos y la provisión de salvaguardias para los profesionales y otras personas que traten de proporcionar asistencia a esos testigos, son un elemento fundamental en la lucha contra la impunidad.

Seguiremos atentamente el progreso de las investigaciones sobre las aparentes ejecuciones extrajudiciales arriba detalladas, para ver si se descubre la verdad de los hechos y si todos los responsables, incluyendo a los autores intelectuales de los abusos, son identificados y llevados ante la justicia.

También observaremos con especial atención la aplicación de cualquier condena que impongan los tribunales. Si bien es cierto que Amnistía Internacional no toma posición frente a la concesión de amnistías o indultos oficiales una vez que las investigaciones han sacado a luz la verdad sobre abusos concretos y una vez que los responsables han sido declarados culpables, nos preocupa que, en una serie de casos, los perpetradores de los abusos, incluyendo ejecuciones extrajudiciales y desapariciones forzadas, sigan impunes porque las autoridades competentes no han hecho cumplir las decisiones de los tribunales. Esta omisión podría desvirtuar los esfuerzos que el gobierno colombiano está haciendo para aumentar la confianza pública en el proceso judicial y también podría contribuir a la comisión de más abusos, al fomentar la sensación de impunidad entre los perpetradores. Un caso ilustrativo de estas aparentes "amnistías de hecho" es el del juicio y la condena en rebeldía de doce líderes y miembros de fuerzas paramilitares, y de las autoridades civiles que los apoyaron, por una serie de matanzas cometidas en Urabá en 1988. Desde la fecha en que se dictó sentencia, dos de los condenados han muerto en circunstancias no esclarecidas. Que sepamos, ninguno de los restantes, incluyendo al ex alcalde de Puerto Boyacá, ha sido capturado y encarcelado. Me consta por nuestras conversaciones que el Sr. Presidente cree firmemente en la necesidad de romper el ciclo de impunidad en Colombia, y este criterio fue confirmado nuevamente por el Dr. Humberto de la Calle Lombana en su carta del 28 de agosto. Por lo tanto, me permito instar respetuosamente al Sr. Presidente a que tome medidas urgentes para asegurar que respondan ante la justicia todos aquellos que sean hallados responsables de violar los derechos humanos.

En opinión de Amnistía Internacional, el fenómeno de la impunidad es uno de los principales factores que contribuyen a las reiteradas violaciones de derechos humanos en Colombia. El enjuiciamiento de los perpetradores no sólo reviste importancia en relación con cada caso concreto: también constituye un mensaje inequívoco de que no se tolerarán las violaciones de derechos humanos y de que quienes las cometan deberán rendir cuenta de sus actos. Cuando no se piden cuentas a los autores, se pone en marcha, a perpetuidad, un ciclo de violencia que es terreno abonado para continuas violaciones de derechos humanos veladas por la impunidad. Los esfuerzos de un gobierno para poner fin a la impunidad son un índice crítico de su voluntad política de asegurar el respeto por los derechos humanos.

Durante las conversaciones mantenidas en mayo en Santafé de Bogotá, los miembros de su gobierno expresaron repetidamente su ansiedad ante la reactivación de las fuerzas



paramilitares en los primeros meses del año. Como observé en mi carta al Sr. Ministro de Gobierno, Amnistía Internacional ve con honda inquietud que el documento "Estrategia Nacional contra la Violencia" no contenga una estrategia específica y precisa para combatir a las organizaciones paramilitares y asegurar su disolución. Es por ello que nos fue grato saber, a través de la respuesta del Sr. Ministro, que el gobierno colombiano comparte nuestras preocupaciones sobre la necesidad de combatir y disolver dichas fuerzas. La urgencia de medidas decisivas contra las fuerzas paramilitares responsables de numerosas violaciones de derechos humanos se acrecienta tras los informes, recibidos en las últimas semanas, sobre el resurgimiento de sus actividades.

Según dichos informes, las fuerzas paramilitares ubicadas en San Juan Bosco La Verde han cometido numerosos abusos contra vecinos de la región de San Vicente de Chucuri, departamento de Santander. Entre estos abusos se incluyen, al parecer, la exacción de impuestos a fin de recaudar fondos para adquirir pertrechos y armamento y el reclutamiento forzoso de miembros de las comunidades locales para hacerlos participar en actividades paramilitares, durante las cuales se los obliga a veces no sólo a enfrentarse con fuerzas guerrilleras sino también a cometer abusos contra civiles no combatientes. Los civiles que se han negado a colaborar habrían sido víctimas de represalias: amenazas, actos de hostigamiento y asesinatos. Al parecer, los líderes paramilitares afirman contar con el consentimiento y el apoyo de los jefes militares y las autoridades civiles de la región. Esta afirmación se vería corroborada por el hecho de que, a pesar de que la municipalidad de San Vicente de Chucuri se halla fuertemente militarizada, no se ha sabido de enfrentamiento alguno entre las fuerzas armadas regulares y los grupos paramilitares de la zona. Es más, con frecuencia las patrullas militares regulares van acompañadas de miembros de las fuerzas paramilitares.

Aunque los comandantes militares regionales, en respuesta a las quejas de los vecinos, han negado la existencia de fuerzas paramilitares en la zona, se sabe que han presionado a los campesinos para que compren armas suministradas por el ejército y para que formen grupos "de autodefensa", en aparente contravención del Decreto Ley 815 de 1989, que suspendió la legislación (artículo 33 de la Ley 48 de 1968) que facultaba a las fuerzas armadas a suministrar armamento militar a civiles.

Del departamento de Boyacá han llegado informes similares sobre un resurgimiento de las actividades paramilitares y, según un reciente comunicado del grupo "Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio", publicado en la prensa nacional, las fuerzas paramilitares de Puerto Boyacá, departamento de Santander, han anunciado su intención de reanudar sus actividades de "control y limpieza" contra los elementos "comunistas" del Magdalena Medio. El comunicado decía también que las fuerzas del grupo habían sido transferidas a los municipios de Yondó, en el departamento de Antioquia, y Barrancabermeja, Sabana

de Torres, El Centro, El Carmen y San Vicente de Chucuri en el departamento de Santander.

Amnistía Internacional pide respetuosamente al Sr. Presidente que redoble sus esfuerzos para cumplir la promesa de su discurso inaugural de agosto de 1990: <<Enfrentaremos con todo el rigor a los grupos paramilitares. Me comprometo a poner todo el empeño del Estado colombiano en el desmantelamiento de esos grupos.>> Le rogamos también que imparta con regularidad instrucciones claras y terminantes a las fuerzas de seguridad en el sentido de que deben ajustar su conducta, en toda ocasión, a los principios fundamentales que informan la legislación internacional de derechos humanos.

Deseo una vez más expresar mi gratitud por la buena disposición que ha mostrado su gobierno para escuchar y discutir en profundidad los asuntos que preocupan a Amnistía Internacional en materia de derechos humanos en Colombia y, al mismo tiempo, reiterar nuestro deseo de continuar el diálogo sobre asuntos de común interés.

Muy atentamente,

Ian Martin  
Secretario General

INTERNAL (for AI members only)

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**COLOMBIA**

### A further exchange of views with the Colombian government

Please find attached in English and in Spanish a copy of a letter to the Secretary General from the Colombian Minister of the Interior and the Secretary General's response to President César Gaviria Trujillo. **Please note that this document follows on from and must only be used in conjunction with the circular AMR 23/37/91 - *Colombia: Amnesty International's speech to the National Constituent Assembly and exchange of views with the Minister of the Interior***

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

**Sections:** Please ensure that all relevant people in the section have received copies for their attention, and that the document is attached to AMR 23/37/92 and centrally filed for future reference.

**Home Government Lobbyists and North Andean RAN/Colombia coordinators:** If meetings were held with the government officials and/or Colombian diplomatic representatives in your country following the publication of the previous circulars *Colombia: Recommendations to the National Assembly for Constitutional Reform* (AMR 23/20/91) and *Colombia: Amnesty International's speech to the National Constituent Assembly and exchange of views with the Minister of the Interior* (AMR 23/37/91), please also use this document to follow up those meetings. Please liaise with one another to co-ordinate any meetings which may take place.

**Press officers:** Please make this document, which should be used only in conjunction with AMR 23/37/91, freely available to your press contacts with an interest in Colombia.

### DISTRIBUTION BY THE IS

This document has been sent direct by the IS to: Sections for information and to Home Government Lobbyists and North Andean RAN/Colombia coordinators for action.