

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/possible "disappearances"

07 May 2004

COLOMBIA

**Diana FINCE URIANA (f)
Reina FINCE PUSHAINA (f), aged 13
Child (f), aged 11**

Other members of the Wayúu indigenous community of Bahía Portete, municipality of Uribia, department of La Guajira

Army-backed paramilitaries reportedly raided an indigenous community in the department of La Guajira on 18 April 2004 and killed at least eight people. They also abducted an 11-year-old child, the woman and child named above, and several other people, whose whereabouts are now unknown. Amnesty International is seriously concerned that unless the authorities take action immediately, paramilitaries will kill more people in the region, and the lives of those abducted will be in grave danger. Reports received today by Amnesty International indicate that inhabitants of the indigenous community, currently displaced, have recently been threatened by paramilitaries.

The paramilitaries came into the Bahía Portete community, in the municipality of Uribia, department of La Guajira, whose inhabitants are members of the Wayúu tribe, in the morning of 18 April. They apparently questioned a number of children about the whereabouts of their parents, and killed several whom they thought were lying. They are reported to have tortured several of the adults whom they went on to kill.

They abducted several people, including the two women named above, but it has not been possible to determine exactly how many people have been abducted, and whose whereabouts remain unknown, or have been killed.

Since the raid, the inhabitants of Bahía Portete, who number around 580, have fled their homes and sought refuge in the municipal capital, Uribia, and neighbouring areas.

The names of those known to have been killed so far have been given as Nicolás Barros Ballesteros; Arturo Epiayu; Alberto Everts Fince; Rolán Everts Fince; Rosa Fince Uriana; Margarita Epianayu; and Rubén Epianayu (aged 16).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the course of the four decades of internal conflict in Colombia, between the security forces and their paramilitary allies, and armed opposition groups, the civilian population has increasingly been the target of human rights violations and abuses.

Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant farmer communities in conflict zones and areas of economic strategic importance, such as areas earmarked for projects such as mineral exploitation or hydro-electric schemes have repeatedly been labelled "subversive" by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. These accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations including paramilitary attacks on threatened communities.

Armed opposition groups have also threatened and killed members of communities in rural areas they accuse of siding with the security force or their paramilitary enemies.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the Wayúu indigenous community of Bahía Portete in the department of La Guajira, of whom more than 10 are thought to have been killed or have “disappeared” during an attack by army-backed paramilitary gunmen on 18 April;
- expressing particular concern for the safety of Diana Fince Uriana, Reina Fince Pushiana and other members of the community reportedly abducted by the paramilitaries on 18 April, whose whereabouts are now unknown;
- calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the abduction and possible “disappearance” of these people, and into the reported killings of several indigenous people, including those named above, and to take all necessary action to find out where the abductees are and bring those responsible for their abduction to justice;
- expressing concern about the paramilitary presence in the region and urging the authorities to take action to protect the civilian population;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592 / 337 5890

Salutation: Dear President Uribe/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Head of the Armed Forces

General Carlos Alberto Ospina Ovalle
Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52 (CAN)
Edificio Comando General 4o piso
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 266 02 98

Salutation: Dear General/ Sr. General

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalía General de la Nación
Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite)
Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 / 2000 (you will hear a message in Spanish asking you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

National Indigenous Organization

ONIC, Calle 13, No.4-38, 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 18 June 2004.