

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/06/96

UA 19/96

"Disappearance" / Fear for safety

29 January 1996

COLOMBIA José Sosa, community activist

Luis José Guerrero Arias

Eduardo Criado

Numa Criado

Jesús Sosa

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José Sosa and Luis José Guerrero Arias have not been seen since they were abducted on 28 January 1996 by approximately 15 armed men in Ocaña, Norte de Santander department.

At 3pm on 28 January, some 15 armed and masked men identifying themselves as members of the *Fiscalía*, the Attorney General's Office, forcibly entered the house of the Criado family looking for the brothers Eduardo Criado and Numa Criado and for José Sosa and his son Jesús Sosa, whose names appeared on a list the gunmen had in their possession. However, none of the four men was at Criado house at the time. The armed men ransacked the house, stole money and valuables and then left.

At 4pm on the same day the armed group went to José Sosa's house, close to the Criado house. They seized José Sosa, tied him and took him out of the house. They forced him into a car where another man, Luis José Guerrero Arias, was already handcuffed. Luis José Guerrero Arias had reportedly been taken from his house in Ocaña, which was also ransacked, earlier in the day.

Despite efforts by their families and local human rights groups to locate the two men, their whereabouts remain unknown. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety and for the safety of the other three men, Eduardo Criado, Numa Criado and Jesús Sosa, whose names reportedly appear on the gunmen's list.

José Sosa is a member of *Movimiento de Acción Comunitaria*, Community Action Movement, in the town of Aguachica, Cesar department. He had previously received several death threats, as a result of which he moved to nearby Ocaña in Santander department. On 24 January 1995 José Sosa was detained by members of the UNASE (an elite combined military and police anti-kidnap unit) in Aguachica, which handed him over to the *Fiscalía*. He was released several months later and charges against him were dropped for lack of evidence against him.

Members of the Community Action Movement have been subjected to a systematic campaign of intimidation and attacks in recent years. Several members have been killed by paramilitary forces. In carrying out their attacks, paramilitary forces have frequently sought to hide their identity by presenting themselves as members of guerrilla organizations or of official bodies such as the *Fiscalía*, Attorney General Office.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators

brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of José Sosa and Luis José Guerrero Arias and urging an immediate investigation to establish their whereabouts;
- urging that, if they are in detention, they be treated humanely and allowed access to lawyers, relatives and medical treatment;
- asking that they be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or immediately released;
- calling for a full and impartial investigations into their "disappearance"
- allegedly by members of a paramilitary group - and calling for the results to be made public and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice;
- calling for immediate and effective measures to protect Eduardo Criado, Numa Criado and Jesús Sosa.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 289 3377 / 286 7434**

**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper**

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez  
Procurador General de la Nación  
Procuraduría General  
Edificio Banco Ganadero  
Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Procurador General Vásquez, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723 / 281 7531**

**Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Vásquez**

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior  
Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7  
Santafé de Bogotá  
COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 6524 / 286 0053 / 286 0485**

**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**

**Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

4) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento  
Fiscal General de la Nación  
Fiscalía General de la Nación

Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá  
Colombia

**Telegrams:** Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia  
**Faxes:** + 57 1 245 5292 or 287 0939 or 288 2828  
**Salutation:** Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

**COPIES TO:**

Alternative Legal Association  
MINGA  
AA 40303  
Santafé 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 20 March 1996.