

**COLOMBIA Civilian population living in the neighbourhood of La Esperanza, and neighbouring areas of Barrancabermeja city, central Colombia**

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On the night of 5 February 2000, a 10 year old boy was shot in the leg when an army patrol reportedly went into the neighbourhood of La Esperanza, in Barrancabermeja city, and started to fire their guns indiscriminately and otherwise terrorize people.

Amnesty International is now very concerned for the safety of people living in the neighborhood and surrounding areas. La Esperanza is a poor neighbourhood within Barrancabermeja city, Santander Department, central Colombia.

One family, who were holding a party at the time, were reportedly intimidated and both physically and verbally abused by the soldiers who fired shots and called out: "*salgan guerrilleros hijos de puta...ahora si se esconden*" ("come out guerrillas, sons of bitches...now you're hiding").

The young boy shot in the leg was taken to a local hospital where he received medical attention.

The army patrol belongs to counter-insurgency Battalion 45 "Heroes of Majagual", *Batallón 45 "Héroes de Majagual"*.

According to reports there was no armed confrontation between guerrillas and the army patrol. Only the army battalion fired shots.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Guerrilla groups have a strong presence in the southeastern and northeastern areas of Barrancabermeja city. For several years, paramilitary groups, operating in alliance with the armed forces, have been responsible for many serious human rights violations in the area. On 16 May 1998, paramilitary forces went into some of the poorer districts of Barrancabermeja and killed 11 people and abducted 25 others. The whereabouts of those abducted are still not known (see Amnesty Report Barrancabermeja.. A City Under Siege, May 1999, AMR 23/36/99 and UA 156/98, AMR 23/34/98, 18 May 1998 and follow ups). At least one soldier is under disciplinary investigation for his involvement in the raid and several other security force officials are being investigated for dereliction of duty.

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

- expressing concern that, on 5 February 2000, an army battalion went into the neighbourhood of La Esperanza, Barrancabermeja, fired shots indiscriminately among the civilian population, verbally and physically abused people, and shouted threats;
- expressing concern for the safety of people living in La Esperanza and surrounding neighbourhoods;
- calling on the authorities to take all appropriate measures to ensure their safety, including decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups who operate in the region, in line with stated government commitments;
- urging that full and impartial investigations are carried out into the harassment and intimidation of people in La Esperanza by counter-insurgency *Batallón 45 "Héroes de Majagual"* on 5 February 2000, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**  
**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 2186 / 337 1351**  
**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana**

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior  
 Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2  
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 0053**  
**Salutation:Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramirez  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**  
**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**  
**Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Miguel de Jesús Arenas Prada  
 Gobernador del Departamento de Santander  
 Gobernación de Santander, Calle 37, No. 10-30  
 Bucaramanga, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams:Gobernador Santander, Bucaramanga, Colombia**  
**Faxes: + 57 7 633 9889**  
**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Regional Human Rights Corporation (Non Governmental Organization)  
 CREDHOS  
 AA 505, Barrancabermeja  
 Santander, 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 23 March 2000.