

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/011/2002

28 January 2002

Further information on UA 22/01 (AMR 23/008/01, 29 January 2001) and follow-up (AMR 23/028/2001, 8 March; AMR 23/035/2001, 26 March; AMR 23/061/2001, 8 June; AMR 23/087/2001, 7 September; AMR 23/113/2001, 12 November; AMR 23/117/01, 20 November; AMR 23/127/2001, 19 December) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Patricia Ramírez (f), member of the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization in Barrancabermeja, Santander department

Army-backed paramilitaries abducted OFP member Patricia Ramírez on 19 January in Barrancabermeja. They released her a few hours later when the security forces began to search for her, but Amnesty International remains gravely concerned for her safety.

A group of men who said they were members of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defense Force of Colombia, reportedly entered Patricia Ramírez's mother's house at 7pm, and abducted both women. They were reportedly brought to the commander of the AUC's *suroriental* (south-eastern branch), who operate in the area.

Her colleagues at the *Organización Femenina Popular* (OFP), Popular Women's Organization, and other human rights organizations, reported what had happened, and the Civilian Intelligence Service, *Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad* (DAS), reportedly began a search of the area where the women were being held. The AUC reportedly set the women free when they heard that the DAS were in the area.

Patricia Ramírez and other OFP members face continuous threats, harassment and attack from paramilitary groups, because of their refusal to give up their work in defence of human rights despite the paramilitaries' attempts to take control of the region.

Many thanks to all who have sent appeals. Amnesty International will continue to campaign on behalf of the OFP, and will issue further Urgent Actions when necessary. Please send a final round of appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to take appropriate action to protect Patricia Ramírez and other members of the *Organización Femenina Popular*, so they can continue their legitimate work for the defence and promotion of human rights without fear of attack or intimidation;
- calling for an immediate, impartial and full investigation into the abduction of Patricia Ramírez and her mother on 19 January, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- urging the government to adhere to its obligations regarding human rights defenders, as laid out in United Nation and Organization of American States declarations, and in line with the UN's repeated recommendations that they should take measures to guarantee the safety of human rights defenders;
- expressing concern that the government has taken no effective action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite their own commitments and UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Santander, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Armando Estrada Villa,
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior,
Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 5298/ 562 9890

Salutation: Dear Minister Estrada Villa/Sr. Ministro Estrada Villa

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell
Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Oficina 217, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister Bell/Sr. Ministro Bell

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Jorge Eliecer Gómez Villamizar, Gobernador del Departamento de Santander,
Gobernación de Santander,
Calle 37, No. 10-30,
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Telegram: Gobernador Santander, Bucaramanga, Colombia

Fax: +57 76 339889

Salutation: Dear Governor Gómez Villamizar/Sr. Gobernador Gómez Villamizar

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

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana/Dear President Pastrana

COPIES TO:

Women's grassroots organization

Organización Femenina Popular
Cra 22 No 52B - 36
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 11 March 2002.