

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 82/92 Threats and Harassment

9 March 1992

COLOMBIA Indian Community of VUELTA DEL RIO

including Anselmo ALAPE
Vidal CHUCUARA
Antonio RODRIGUEZ
Raúl MORENO

Amnesty International has learned with concern of reports that an Indian community living in Vuelta del Rio, municipality of Ortega, Tolima department, has been the victim of harassment and threatening behaviour by the Colombian armed forces.

According to reports, on 24 February 1992 approximately 60 soldiers from the Caicedo Battalion, Batallón Caicedo, whose base is in the nearby town of Chaparral, arrived at the Indian community between 3am and 8am. They reportedly caused panic in the community when they carried out searches of many of the Indian's homes without official search warrants, and asked for several members of the community whose names appeared on a list they carried with them, including Anselmo Alape, Vidal Chucucara, Antonio Rodríguez and Raúl Moreno.

There is concern for the physical integrity of those people whose names appeared on the list and for the safety of the community as a whole. Indigenous communities in Colombia have been the victims of serious human rights violations committed by government forces or paramilitary groups whose activities have been supported or tolerated by the Colombian armed forces. These violations sometimes take place in the context of land disputes or against a background of civil conflict (please refer to UA 456/91, AMR 23/72/91 of 20 December 1991 - Massacre of Paez Indians, and UA 514/90, AMR 23/66/90 of 20 December 1990 - Human Rights Violations against Arhuaco Indian leaders).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In September 1991 the Procurator General's office produced an official report which stated that more than 2,300 complaints had been lodged against the army and police in the last two years for human rights violations. President César Gaviria Trujillo, on presenting the report, stated:

"No puede el Gobierno desconocer la gravedad de las acusaciones que se hacen en forma reiterada y masiva contra sus agentes, ni ignorar hasta que punto reina la impunidad por violación de derechos humanos."

"The government cannot fail to recognize the seriousness of the accusations made

constantly and on a massive scale against its agents, nor ignore the extent of impunity in cases of human rights violations".

However, despite the government's commitment to uphold respect for human rights, members of the Colombian armed forces have continued to commit serious abuses, including torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" with virtual impunity.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern for the physical integrity of the indigenous community of Vuelta del Rio, including those named above, following harassment and threats against the community by the army's Caicedo Battalion;

- urging an immediate enquiry into these events, the results of which should be made public;

- urging the authorities to protect the physical integrity of indigenous communities and ensure that they are able to carry out their lawful activities without fear.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /
Dear President Gaviria**

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066, + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Procurador General de la Nación /
Dear Dr. Arrieta**

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr Jaime Córdoba Triviño
Defensor del Pueblo
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Estimado Dr Triviño /
Dear Dr. Triviño**

Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, c/o Procuraduria General, Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PREGN CO OR 41213 pgndp CO

Faxes + 57 1 284 0472

4) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda

Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Indigenous Peoples' Association:

CRIT

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados

AA 44456

Santa Fe de Bogotá

COLOMBIA

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 April 1992.