

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/20/98

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section

UA 103/98 Colombia

Fear for Safety

3 April 1998

COLOMBIA Argemiro JIMÉNEZ

Rosmira TABARES, (f)

Navier Antonio JIMÉNEZ, aged 7

Jorge JIMÉNEZ, aged 4

Dorely JIMÉNEZ, aged 13

Residents of San José de Apartadó

On 26 March 1998, Colombian army soldiers opened fire on the house of Argemiro Jiménez and Rosmira Tabares, in the hamlet of Bellavista, injuring them and their three children. This has heightened concern for the safety of other members of the community, which comes under the jurisdiction of San José de Apartadó, municipality of Apartadó, in the Urabá region of the department of Antioquia.

When local witnesses reportedly demanded an explanation from army personnel as to the reasons for the attack they replied: "*se lo tenían merecido porque eran unos alcahuetes de la guerrilla*", "They deserved it because they were guerrilla collaborators".

The attack follows an earlier incident on 19 March where inhabitants of the San José de Apartadó community were reportedly insulted and harassed by Colombian army soldiers. These attacks have led the inhabitants of Bellavista and nearby hamlets of La Cristalina and La Linda to abandon their homes in fear.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In March 1997, San José de Apartadó declared itself to be a *Comunidad de Paz*, Peace Community, in an attempt to persuade warring factions to respect their neutrality and right to life. Since the declaration, over 30 inhabitants have been killed and two "disappeared" (see UA 393/97, AMR 23/85/97, 16 December 1997 and follow-up), the majority by army-backed paramilitary groups but several others by members of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, guerrilla group.

The community of San José de Apartadó is made up of around 1,000 people forcibly displaced from their homes in the Urabá region in 1996 and 1997. This was in the wake of massacres committed by army-backed paramilitaries and arbitrary killings and death threats by guerrilla groups.

Inhabitants of the community of San José de Apartadó have demanded that the Colombian Government secure conditions for their safe return to the lands they have abandoned. However, they continue to face death threats and to be labelled guerrilla sympathizers by members of the security forces and their paramilitary allies. These accusations have left the inhabitants exposed to continued human rights violations.

Some displaced communities living in San José de Apartadó have started to return to their lands in neighbouring areas. On 23 March, 300 people returned to the nearby hamlet of La Unión from which they had fled one year previously. There is serious concern for the safety of these peoples as no effective action

has been taken by the authorities to dismantle paramilitary groups in the area.

In addition no attempt has been made to bring members of these groups or the security forces, responsible for human rights violations, to justice. The recent attack on the hamlet of Bellavista has been seen as a threat to the process of return to abandoned lands.

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

- calling for full and impartial investigations into the alleged attack by members of the Colombian Army against Argmiro Jiménez, Navier Antonio Jiménez, Rosmira Tabares, Jorge Jiménez and Dorely Jiménez and other members of the civilian population in the hamlet of Bellavista, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of all the residents of the community of San José de Apartadó and for the safety of members of the community returning to their lands in La Unión;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the region and for members of the security forces responsible for supporting such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated governmental commitments.

APPEALS TO:

Attorney General

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Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2000 (ask for the fax extension 2017 - Me da la extensión 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Alonso López Caballero
Mnistro del Interior
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Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
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Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, Santafé de Bogotá

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 15 May 1998.