

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/026/2001

28 February 2001

Further information on UA 39/01 (AMR 23/018/2001, 12 February 2001) - Fear for Safety / Possible "Disappearance"

COLOMBIA Baudilio ROLON

Aleiro MARQUEZ

Civilian populations of El Tarra and Tibú, department of Norte de Santander

Killed: Luis Ramón VELOZA BERMÚDEZ

Edilberto Santiago NAVARRO

A person know as Fabio El Llanero

One other unidentified person

Army-backed paramilitaries have attacked two communities in the El Tarra municipality, killing several people, only one week after Amnesty International expressed concern for the safety of the civilian population in the area.

On 19 February an army-backed paramilitary group entered the communities of El Martillo and Plaza Cotiza, near the hamlet of Filo Gringo. Most of the population had fled before the paramilitaries arrived. However, the paramilitaries reportedly abducted, tortured and killed the four people named above.

A few days earlier, a non-governmental organization had warned the commanders of the *V Brigada del Ejército Nacional*, V Army Brigade, who operate in the area, that paramilitaries were threatening to attack rural areas of El Tarra, in particular those surrounding the hamlet of Filo Gringo. Despite this warning, the security forces failed to take any effective action to prevent the attack. On the contrary, on 24 February army personnel attached to the *Batallón de Contraguerrillas No.36 "Comuneros"*, Anti-Guerilla Battalion No.36 "Comuneros", which is under the command of the V army brigade, were reportedly seen in the area in the company of known paramilitary members carrying army weapons.

Since a paramilitary offensive was launched in the region in 1999, many civilians have suffered serious human rights violations, and there has been a number of killings and "disappearances". In February 2000 a large group of paramilitaries entered Filo Gringo and burned much of the village to the ground, despite regional authorities and the Colombian Army having been warned that an attack was imminent (see UA 16/00, AMR 23/02/00, 24 January 2000 and follow-up AMR 23/10/00, 8 March 2000). In April 2000 paramilitaries shot dead 21 members of a displaced community sheltering in the area (see UA 80/00, AMR 23/17/00, 7 April 2000).

The whereabouts of Baudilio Rolon and Aleiro Marquez remain unknown. A Colombian human rights organisation has called on the regional authorities to locate the men, but it is not clear if they have taken any effective action to do so.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian populations in the El Tarra and Tibú region, Norte de Santander Department, following the latest paramilitary attack;
- asking what measures the government and armed forces will take to guarantee their safety;

- expressing concern for the safety of Baudilio Rolon and Albeiro Marquez, who were reportedly abducted by paramilitaries on 7 February, calling for a full and impartial investigation into their "disappearance" and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the failure of the government and armed forces to take steps to protect the civilian population of El Tarra and Tibú and combat paramilitary groups in the area, despite repeated warnings of impending paramilitary attacks;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Norte de Santander, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Foreign Relations

Dr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto
 Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Palacio San Carlos
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 45209 MRRE CO

Faxes: + 57 1 562 7822

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of V Brigade

Comandante de la V Brigada
 General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
 Calle 14, Carrera 33
 Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Faxes: +57 76 359 189 / 334 390

Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Commandante

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 11 April 2001.