

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible extrajudicial executions/
Fear for safety

30 April 1993

COLOMBIA: Elio VALDONADO
Herminia BARBOSA (female)
Octavio BOVILLA

Amnesty International has learned with concern of the killing of Elio Valdonado, his wife Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla, following their reported detention by members of the Colombian army on 12 April 1993 in the community of Brisas de Caranal, Arauquita municipality, Arauca department. There is concern for the safety of other civilians living in the area where the army is carrying counter-insurgency operations.

According to information received, Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla left their homes on 12 April to travel to the village of Filipinas in the Villanueva community. As they arrived at the community, the vehicle in which they were travelling was reportedly intercepted by an army counter-insurgency patrol, allegedly under the command of Major Castro and Captain Ospina and believed to be attached to the army's 16th Brigade, Brigada XVI. Witnesses report that the soldiers opened fire on the vehicle carrying Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla and that they ran to a nearby house for shelter. They were then seen to be forcefully taken from the house, beaten and detained by the soldiers.

Friends and family became concerned when the detention of Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla was not acknowledged and they were not released. A delegation from the community, including members of the town council, *una comisión del Consejo*, the mayoress, *alcaldesa* and local ombudsman, *personero municipal* reportedly asked for news of the three detainees, but the army Brigade spokesman denied that they had been detained. Local people then organized an intense search of the area and on 15 April, the bodies of Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla were found, half-buried. The bodies reportedly showed signs of gunshot and stab wounds and the body of Herminia Barbosa showed signs of mutilation.

A witness later reported having seen Octavio Bovilla surrounded by soldiers following his detention. He reported that he saw Octavio Bovilla run from the soldiers and then heard shots being fired. Various families reported seeing Elio Valdonado and Herminia Barbosa being taken away by soldiers in an army vehicle and say that they later heard the sound of gunfire coming from the place where their bodies were found.

The killing of Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla has been denounced to national authorities, including the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, la Defensoría del Pueblo. Elio Valdonado and Herminia Barbosa leave eight children, the youngest being three-month-old twins.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The department of Arauca is located in the remote north-east of Colombia, on the border

with Venezuela. For many years several guerrilla groups have been active in the region and, as a result, there is a high military presence there, particularly of soldiers specifically engaged in counter-insurgency operations. As in other regions, the civilian population has become a victim of the confrontations between army and guerrilla with local people often being perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and as a result subjected to abuses by regular army and police personnel and civilians working for them, abuses including arbitrary arrest, torture and extrajudicial execution.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in Spanish, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the killing of Elio Valdonado, Herminia Barbosa and Octavio Bovilla following their detention on 12 April 1993 reportedly by soldiers from the army's Mobile Brigade No. 16;

- urging an immediate and thorough inquiry into their deaths, the results of which should be made public and those found responsible brought to justice;

- urging the government to take all possible measures to protect the civilian population in areas where the army is carrying out counter-guerrilla operations.

APPEALS TO

1) Commander of the Army:

Mayor General Hernán José Guzmán Rodríguez
Comandante del Ejército
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante del Ejercito, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 43401 COEJC

**Salutation: Sr. Comandante /
Dear Commander**

2) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño
Defensor del Pueblo
Defensoría del Pueblo
Calle 34, Carrera 5
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo, Bogota, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

**Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño /
Dear Dr. Triviño**

3) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
Fiscal General
Fiscalia General
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 287 0939

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff /
Dear Dr. de Greiff**

4) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr.
Presidente /**

Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937

Dear President Gaviria

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) <u>Procurator General:</u> 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	2) <u>Human Rights and Educational Organization:</u> Señores CINEP AA 25916 Santa Fe de Bogotá Colombia
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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 June 1993.