

**COLOMBIA The civilian population of Puerto Rondón and Cravo Norte
municipalities, Arauca Department including at least 21
named individuals**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the civilian population of Puerto Rondón and Cravo Norte municipalities, Arauca Department, following reports of a planned paramilitary incursion into the municipalities over Easter.

Suspected paramilitaries issued a death threat to at least 21 named individuals in a leaflet circulated in Puerto Rondón on 6 March. Those named were reportedly given one month to leave the region or else they would become "paramilitary targets".

The XVIII Brigade of the Colombian Army have reportedly decided to withdraw troops stationed in both the urban areas and outskirts of Puerto Rondón and Cravo Norte municipalities. Given the reports of a planned paramilitary incursion, as well as reports of paramilitary checkpoints two kilometres from the Cravo Norte town centre, Amnesty International fears that the civilian population has been left unprotected from paramilitary attacks.

Non-governmental human rights organizations working in the area have expressed their concern at the decision of the XVIII Brigade. Many have requested preventative action on behalf of the civilian population by the Colombian government and security forces in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. In the last five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. The Colombian government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989, yet they continue to work with the support of the security forces - by action or omission - in many areas of the country. Guerrilla forces have also carried out numerous killings and other violations of international humanitarian law against members of peasant, black, and indigenous communities, whom they accuse of collaborating with the security forces or paramilitary groups.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in Puerto Rondón and Cravo Norte;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the threats against at least 21 people in Puerto Rondón, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Arauca Department, and asking that the results of the investigation are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are 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 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 2071

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

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 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Commander General of the Armed Forces

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin
Comandante General de las Fuerzas Militares
Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: Commander General, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 221 2935/ 222 2096 / 221 3653

Salutation: Dear Commander General Tapias Stahelin / Estimado Sr. Tapias Stahelin

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,
Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 640 0491

Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz

COPIES 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 9 May 2002.