

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/34/95
Distr: UA/SC

UA 166/95

"Disappearances" / Threats

7 July 1995

COLOMBIA

Maribel SALDARRIAGA (f), aged 19
Jaime BERRIO
Robinson GRANADER

Maribel Saldarriaga, Jaime Berrio and Robinson Granader were arrested in Montepiedra, Turbo municipality in the Urabá region of Antioquia department on 22 May 1995 by army personnel from the XVII Brigade. They have not been seen since and there is serious concern for their safety.

Information just received by Amnesty International indicates that Maribel Saldarriaga, and her two friends, Jaime Berrio and Robinson Granader were arrested on suspicion of being members of the EPL guerrilla group. According to the enquiries made by Maribel Saldarriaga's relatives, the army handed her and the two young men over to paramilitary forces operating in the area.

Since they denounced her "disappearance", Maribel Saldarriaga's relatives have received threats and on 21 June their house was illegally searched by members of a paramilitary group together with the army brigadier of the XVII Brigade. The latter had reportedly been involved in her detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, has made repeated promises, both during his election campaign and since taking office, to improve the human rights situation in Colombia. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces.

Despite these pledges, members of the Colombian security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious violations with virtual impunity. Many paramilitary groups have their origins in the civilian "self-defence" squads which the army created in the 1980s to act as auxiliaries during counter-insurgency operations. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the Colombian armed forces to combat and disband such groups, paramilitary forces have continued to kill and "disappear" perceived opponents with impunity. In many areas of the country paramilitary forces have continued to work with the support of the security forces.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Maribel Saldarriaga, Jaime Berrio and Robinson Granader who have not been seen since their detention by armed forces personnel attached to the XVII Brigade on 22 May 1995;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation to establish their whereabouts, the results of which should be made public;
- urging that if they are in detention, they be treated humanely, granted access to lawyers and relatives, and charged immediately with a recognizable criminal offence or released;
- expressing concern for the safety of Maribel Saldarriaga's relatives and urging that all measures be undertaken to protect them;

- urging that the authorities take immediate measures to dismantle paramilitary groups in line with stated governmental commitments.

APPEALS TO

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874/288 4906

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

3) Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Vásquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 342 9723/281 7531/284 0472

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Vásquez

4) Brigadier of XVII Brigade

Brigadier General Julio Alvarez Vargas
Comandante de la XVII Brigada
Carepa
Uraba, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante XVII Brigada, Carepa, Uraba, Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Comandante

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared"

Señores
ASFADDES
AA 011446
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 20 August 1995.