

3 April 2002

Further information on UA 95/02 (AMR 23/033/2002, 28 March 2002) - Fear for Safety New Concern: Abduction

COLOMBIASifredo Valderrama (m) aged 19

At least three others, names unknown

The civilian population of the Department of Arauca

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the civilian population of the Department of Arauca following a paramilitary incursion into the Betoyes Hamlet, Tame municipality. This follows reports of a planned paramilitary incursion into neighbouring municipalities over Easter.

On 30 March, approximately 200 heavily armed men in military uniform wearing insignia of the army-backed paramilitary group, *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, reportedly surrounded the hamlet of Betoyes and established a road bloc on the road that leads to Arauca, the capital of Arauca Department. The AUC then reportedly gathered together the inhabitants of the hamlet and abducted at least four people, including Sifredo Valderrama, whose whereabouts remain unknown. The inhabitants of Betoyes were reportedly detained and tied up by the AUC for more than 12 hours, despite the fact that the armed forces had reportedly been alerted to the situation.

The AUC were able to establish and maintain their road bloc, despite the fact that the XVIII Brigade of the Colombian Army reportedly decided to withdraw troops stationed in neighbouring Puerto Rondón and Cravo Norte municipalities around 22 March. This was done in order to protect the municipality of Tame. Amnesty International fears that the civilian population has been left unprotected from paramilitary attacks, despite newspaper reports of the Commander of the XVIII Brigade's commitment to protect the municipality of Tame should anything occur.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Sifredo Valderrama, at least three other individuals abducted by the AUC and the civilian population in the Municipality of Tame;
- asking the authorities what action they will take to guarantee the safety of those at risk and urging the authorities to take immediate action to establish their whereabouts and secure their safe release. This action should include the immediate organization of a Search Bloc, *Bloque de Búsqueda*, in line with new legislation against forced "disappearance";
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the capture of Sifredo Valderrama and the other three, 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

Telegram: 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, Bogotá, 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 15 May 2002.