

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 23/36/91
Distr: UA/SC

UA 228/91 Fear of "Disappearance"/Fear of Extrajudicial
Execution

4 July 1991

COLOMBIA: Benedicto CUBIDES, aged 44, peasant
 Eduardo ARIAS, peasant
 Martín ALVAREZ, peasant

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Benedicto Cubides, who was detained by an army patrol on 20 June 1991 in the region of central Colombia known as Magdalena Medio. Amnesty International is also concerned at the killings of Eduardo Arias and Martín Alvarez in Puerto Wilches, also in Magdalena Medio, on 21 June 1991 following their detention by members of the security forces.

On 20 June 1991, peasants Benedicto Cubides and Nelly Sánchez were reportedly detained by members of the Colombian army, accompanied by armed civilians, in the rural area known as Bajo Simacota in the municipality of Simacota, Santander department, in the Magdalena Medio. According to reports, Nelly Sánchez was stripped naked, beaten and insulted by her captors before being released shortly afterwards. Benedicto Cubides, who was seen being led away hooded by soldiers, has not been seen since. The military authorities have denied his arrest although an army patrol is said to have gone to his home and told his wife not to expect him back. Formal complaints have been presented to local and national authorities.

Benedicto Cubides is a member of the regional branch of the Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos (ANUC), National Peasants' Association. He had only recently returned to the region after having fled as a result of death threats.

On 21 June 1991, peasants Eduardo Arias and Martín Alvarez were reportedly detained at a military checkpoint on the outskirts of Puerto Wilches, Santander department. Next day, soldiers took their bodies to a funeral parlour in Barrancabermeja, alleging that they were guerrillas who had died in combat.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The largely rural area of Magdalena Medio has been the focus of political violence for several years following the emergence of guerrilla groups in the 1960s and subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. Despite some progress having been made in peace talks between several of the guerrilla groups and the government, there has been a continuation of political violence.

In areas where guerrilla forces are active, the local civilian population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and paramilitary forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the possible "disappearance" of Benedicto Cubides following his reported detention by army personnel and requesting an urgent investigation into his whereabouts;
- urging that he be immediately brought before a competent court or released;

- urging that, while in detention, he be treated humanely and provided full access to lawyers and relatives;
- expressing concern at the killings of Eduardo Arias and Martín Alvarez in circumstances suggesting they may be the victims of extrajudicial execution;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into their deaths, the results of which should be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic:

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo

(Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente)

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Bogotá D.E., Colombia

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO****Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066; + 57 1 287 7937;****+ 57 1 286 7324**Minister of Defence:

General Oscar Botero Restrepo

(Salutation: Sr. General)

Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52

Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO****Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874**

Coronel Héctor Manuel Bernal Caicedo

(Salutation: Sr. Coronel)

Comandante del Batallón "Nueva Granada"

Calle 12

Pueblo Nuevo

Barrancabermeja

Santander, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Batallón Nueva Granada**Pueblo Nuevo, Barrancabermeja, Colombia**

Tte Coronel Jesús Guzmán Quintero

(Salutation: Sr. Tte. Coronel)

Comandante

Batallón de Infantería No. 40

"Coronel Luciano D'Elhuyer"

San Vicente de Chucurí

Santander, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Batallón "Luciano D'Elhuyer"**San Vicente de Chucurí, Colombia****COPIES TO:**

Dr Gustavo Arrieta Padilla

(Salutation: Sr. Procurador General de la Nación)

Procurador General de la Nación

Procuraduría General
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Bogotá, Colombia

Señores

(Salutation: Señores)

CREDDHOS

AA 788

Barrancabermeja

Colombia (human rights group)

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 August 1991.