

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/36/96

UA 155/96 Possible Extrajudicial Executions / "Disappearance" / Fear for Safety  
26 June 1996

COLOMBIA Jorge Alirio Salazar

José Toro

Raúl Zapata

Raúl Toro

Celina Toro (f), teacher

Lucia Martínez (f), teacher

and other inhabitants of Cristales village

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of the inhabitants of Cristales village in the municipality of San Roque, Antioquia department, following the killing, in circumstances suggesting extrajudicial execution, of Alfonso Zuleta, Jaime Puerta, Francisco Castrillón and the "disappearance" of Jorge Alirio Salazar. The latter's whereabouts remain unknown.

On 17 June 1996, at 7.30am, a group of eighteen armed and uniformed men, some of them masked, arrived in Cristales village, San Roque municipality. The gunmen, who identified themselves as members of a paramilitary group, dragged from their houses several local traders, including Alfonso Zuleta, Jaime Puerta, Francisco Castrillón and Jorge Alirio Salazar. After being exhibited around the hamlet they were all shot dead, with the exception of Jorge Alirio Salazar who was taken from the village and has not been seen since.

There is also serious concern for the safety of José Toro, Raúl Zapata, Raúl Toro, the two teachers Celina Toro and Lucia Martínez, and several peasant farmers of San Antonio hamlet in the Cristales village, who were not present when the paramilitary group called out their names from a list in their possession.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Similar incidents took place on 17 January 1988 and on 28 February 1989 when a priest, Jaime Restrepo López, and a nun, Teresita Ramírez Vargas, were killed in Cristales village after a campaign of harassment and intimidation against church workers, teachers and farmers living in the village. Martín Emilio Sánchez Rodríguez, an army deserter, testified before the Archbishop's delegation in Medellín on 3 May 1990 and, on 20 June 1990, to the *Procuraduría General*, Procurator General's Office, stating that these threats and killings had been planned and carried out by members of the XIV Brigade of the army. A few weeks later Martín Emilio Sánchez Rodríguez was killed.

Despite repeated government pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses 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 organizations continue to work with the support of the security forces. 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. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces. However, no action has been taken to control their actions and to hold their members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the municipality of San Roque, Antioquia department, following the killings, in circumstances suggesting possible extrajudicial execution, of Alfonso Zuleta, Jaime Puerta and Francisco Castrillón on 17 June 1996;
- calling for a full and impartial investigations into the killings and the "disappearance" of Jorge Alirio Salazar by members of a paramilitary group, and calling for the results to be made public and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take all adequate measures to ensure the safety of José Toro, Raúl Zapata, Raúl Toro, Celina Toro, Lucia Martínez and the rest of the civilian population in the municipality of San Roque;
- urging that there be full and impartial investigations into links between the security forces and paramilitary forces and that those members of the security forces responsible for supporting such groups be brought to justice;
- urging that the government immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of the armed forces or with armed forces' complicity and for members of such forces responsible for human rights violations to be brought promptly to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño  
 Carrera 8 No. 7-26  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 289 3377/286 7434/287 7939**

**Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

**Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper**

2) Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Carlos Esguerra Portocarrero  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 222 1874/288 4906**

**Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa , Bogota, Colombia**

**Telex:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
 Ministro del Interior  
 Ministerio del Interior  
 Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 284 0214/288 7177**

**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telex: 45406 MINGO CO**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz

AA 31861

Santafé de Bogotá

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 7 August 1996.