

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/044/2006

08 November 2006

UA 297/06 Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA **Arnold Gómez (m)]**
 Carmelo Agamez (m)]
 Juan David Díaz (m)] human rights defenders and members of the National
 Adolfo Berbel (m)] Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional*
 Jackeline Moguea (f)] *Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*)
 Roberto Serpa (m)]
 Amauri Vidual (m)]

**Other members of the *Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*
in and around the department of Sucre**

The people named above, all members of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (*Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*) in Sucre Department, northern Colombia, are in grave danger. Amnesty International has received reports that their names appear on a 'death list' compiled by army-backed paramilitaries. The lives of other members of the Victims' Movement in Sucre department may also be at risk.

Members of the Victims' Movement became aware of the existence of the 'death list' in August 2006. Amnesty International believes that those people named on the 'death list' may be individuals whom the paramilitaries fear could provide evidence against them in criminal proceedings, as well as those campaigning for their right to truth, justice and reparation in cases of human rights violations. One member of the Victims' Movement, Luis Guevara, was reportedly killed by paramilitaries on 22 August 2006 in the Coveñas area of the municipality of San Onofre, department of Sucre. In the past, human rights defenders and others campaigning for justice in cases of human rights violations committed by the security forces or their paramilitary allies have repeatedly been the target of human rights violations themselves. According to information received, nine people with alleged links to paramilitary structures operating in the north of Colombia whose names appeared on the 'death list' have already been killed.

Criminal investigation authorities recently discovered a computer owned by a paramilitary leader, containing documents highlighting close links between paramilitaries and local political leaders, which could potentially incriminate both paramilitaries and political leaders in cases of human rights violations and other crimes. Amnesty International fears that paramilitaries and their allies will take all possible action to prevent serious investigation into the evidence found on the computer. In this context, efforts by the Victims' Movement to denounce links between paramilitary structures and local politicians, denounce the re-emergence of paramilitary structures in the region, and demand that full criminal investigations are carried out into human rights violations committed by paramilitaries and their supporters, may place its members at increased risk.

The Victims' Movement is a non-governmental organization which campaigns for the surviving relatives of all those killed by the army or their paramilitary allies in the four-decade long armed conflict in Colombia. It is reported that the 'death list' appeared soon after the Victims' Movement held a demonstration in opposition to the re-arming of paramilitaries in Sucre, on 26 August 2006. The organization's subsequent decision to present a report to the Senate, in October 2006, in which they name local and national politicians with clear links to restructured paramilitary groups, has further heightened concerns for their members' safety. The report condemns the emergence of these restructured paramilitary groups in Sucre which are going under the names of Black Eagles (*Águilas Negras*), and The New Generation, (*La Nueva Generacion*). It also draws attention to the presence of nearly 200 demobilized paramilitary members of The New Generation operating in rural areas of the municipality of San Onofre, department of Sucre, and neighbouring areas, who have

claimed to be planning to regain control of San Onofre within a month and of the whole of Sucre by December 2006. In light of this information, the Victims' Movement is calling for the Senate's Commission on Human Rights to visit San Onofre on 27 November.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have supposedly been demobilizing in a government-sponsored process. Despite this, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating in coordination with the security forces. It appears that many paramilitary groups have not demobilized at all, but are continuing to operate, often under new names. Using new names for these groups appears to be part of a strategy to cover up the fact that paramilitary structures have not actually demobilized. Recent public statements made by paramilitary organizations acknowledge that their military structures remain intact.

Amnesty International is concerned that the overall legal framework for the demobilization of illegal armed groups, including the Justice and Peace Law, still fails to conform to international human rights standards on the right to truth, justice and reparation, and exacerbates Colombia's endemic problem of impunity. Impunity remains a major obstacle in Colombia. Perpetrators of human rights violations know that they will not be brought to justice, even when strong evidence against them exists. Human rights defenders and others who threaten this impunity are frequently the target of human rights violations to silence them. Their continued presence in communities sends a clear signal that demanding justice and respect for human rights will be a difficult and often dangerous struggle.

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

- calling on the authorities to take effective action to protect those named above, and other members of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes, *Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado*, as deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, thus allowing them safely to continue their legitimate and important work in the defence of human rights;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces, local politicians and paramilitary groups, 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;
- calling on the authorities to elaborate policy and plans, in conjunction with human rights defenders, regarding the implementation of the principles of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and to make these plans public.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592

Salutation: Dear President Uribe/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dra. María Consuelo Araújo

Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 7822

Salutation: Dear Madam / Sra. Ministra

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01), Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Iguarán / Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Ombudsman

Sr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 oficina 301, 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 December 2006.