

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

20 September 1990

COLOMBIA : Jacinto QUIROGA, peasant leader, aged 46
Leonidas CASTANEDA

Amnesty International is concerned at the killing of Jacinto Quiroga and the serious wounding of Leonidas Castañeda in circumstances suggesting they may have been victims of extrajudicial execution and attempted extrajudicial execution.

According to reports, in the early hours of 10 September 1990 a military patrol of about thirty men belonging to the Colombian army's counter-insurgency Brigada Móvil, Mobile Brigade, arrived in the community of El Guamal, municipality of Bolívar, Santander department, where they occupied several farms and proceeded to surround the house of Jacinto Quiroga, one of the community' leaders. According to members of Jacinto Quiroga's family present at the time, the soldiers surrounding the house then fired off numerous volleys of shots in an apparent attempt to simulate an armed confrontation. During this incident Jacinto Quiroga was shot and killed by the troops in the presence of his family. Military authorities later claimed that Jacinto Quiroga had been "killed in action".

Following his death friends and relatives who had witnessed the killing were reportedly warned by the military patrol that Jacinto Quiroga would not be the only one to be killed, and that they should not be surprised if others were to follow.

In a similar incident close by, peasant farmer Leonidas Castañeda was attacked and seriously injured by the same military patrol. He was taken to hospital, where witnesses report that members of the army stated that he should not be taken care of, because "a los guerrilleros no se les debe dar atención médica", ("guerrillas should not be given medical attention").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the beginning of 1990, Amnesty International has become seriously concerned at the increasing number of reports of killings of non-combatant civilians in Colombia. The majority of attacks on non-combatant civilians occur in rural areas placed under tight army control as a result of alleged guerrilla activity. Some killings of civilians appear to be largely indiscriminate attacks against whole communities, targetted for their perceived political allegiances. In other cases victims, particularly civic and community leaders and members of legal left-wing parties, appear to have been individually targetted and have been subject to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution.

In his inaugural address to the nation in August 1990, President César Gaviria said that the public's confidence and credibility in the armed forces was dependent on them acting within the Constitution and showing absolute respect for human rights.

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

- expressing concern at the reported killing of Jacinto Quiroga in circumstances suggesting he was a victim of extrajudicial execution, and at the serious wounding of Leonidas Castañeda;

- requesting an immediate independent and impartial enquiry into the incidents, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;

- urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives of community leaders to ensure that they are able to carry out their lawful activities.

APPEALS TO

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Bogotá
COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
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General Oscar Botero
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
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Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez
Procurador General de la Nación
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COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Procurador General Gómez, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

COPIES TO:

Señores
CINEP
AA 25916
Bogotá, Colombia

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 2 November 1990.