

UA 167/99

Fear for

**COLOMBIA**The civilian population of Santo Domingo, Bolívar department  
The families of Otoñiel Cárdenas (54)  
and Edilberto Cárdenas Agamez (31) (both killed).

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of civilians in Santo Domingo, in the municipality of San Pablo, Bolívar department, after paramilitaries came into the hamlet on 5 July 1999, shot two of the inhabitants and threatened to kill more.

A paramilitary force operating in the region called a meeting in Santo Domingo, reportedly to inform the inhabitants about a new paramilitary base being set up nearby. Before the meeting they apparently told the local health worker "Va a haber sangre...pero de toro no es" (There'll be blood...but it won't be bull's blood).

At the end of the meeting the paramilitaries told residents that they were free to go, except for Otoñiel Cárdenas, the local *inspector de policía* (a non-professional local representative of the police force) and his son Edilberto Cárdenas Agamez. The two men were forced to lie on the ground and shot dead. According to witnesses one of the paramilitaries then said, "*faltan siete hombres y una mujer*" ("seven men and one woman to go"), raising fears that the paramilitaries are planning further killings.

The paramilitaries control the movements of inhabitants in the area, checking identity papers and setting up road blocks. They have reportedly threatened to kill relatives of anyone who flees the hamlet.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Peasant communities in disputed zones in Colombia's long running civil conflict have frequently suffered human rights violations. Neither the armed forces and their paramilitary allies nor the left-wing armed opposition groups recognize the civilian population's neutrality in the conflict.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. The Colombian Government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989, yet they continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

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

- expressing grave concern for, and urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee, the safety of the civilian population of Santo Domingo, Bolívar department;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killings of Otoñiel Cárdenas and his son Edilberto Cárdenas Agamez, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments.

#### **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

**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351**

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

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

**Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874**

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

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,  
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,  
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 571 570 2022 (After voice dial ext. 2017/2022)**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.**

**COPIES TO: Alternative Legal Association**

MINGA, AA 40303, Santafé de 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 26 August 1999.