

UA 125/01

Fear for**COLOMBIA Victoria DELGADO****Civilian inhabitants of El Paraíso, municipality of San Pablo, department of Bolívar****Killed: Uriel ARRIETA**

Victoria Delgado was reportedly abducted by army-backed paramilitaries on 16 May, in Bolívar department. Her whereabouts are now unknown, and Amnesty International believes she is in grave danger. The civilian population of the area are also under threat.

Paramilitaries reportedly entered the community of El Paraíso, in the municipality of San Pablo, on 16 May, and burned down 20 houses. They threatened the inhabitants and abducted Victoria Delgado. Following the attack many of the inhabitants fled their homes and have sought shelter in neighbouring communities. A peasant farmer from El Paraíso, Uriel Arrieta, had reportedly been abducted by paramilitaries on 10 May, and was later killed.

Victoria Delgado's son, Gildardo Fuentes, was abducted by paramilitaries in November 1999, together with peasant farmer leader Edgar Quiroga. Their whereabouts are now unknown. Their "disappearance" has been widely condemned at national and international level. Relatives and others campaigning for justice in such cases, of human rights violations committed by the security forces or their paramilitary allies, have frequently been the victim of serious human rights violations themselves.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Edgar Quiroga and Gildardo Fuentes had travelled to the capital, Bogotá, to meet with state and government officials and denounce the serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law taking place in the department of Bolívar. These included the forced displacement of thousands of peasant farmers as a result of paramilitary attacks in October 1999. They returned on 27 November 1999, and were abducted the following day.

Edgar Quiroga had been involved in negotiations with the government in 1998 on behalf of displaced peasant farming communities from the department of Bolívar and neighbouring areas. These had resulted in the government signing an agreement to guarantee their safety and take action to combat the paramilitary groups responsible for their displacement. The government, however, has failed to take any effective action and several of the representatives of the communities have reportedly since been killed or threatened by paramilitary forces in the region. Edgar Quiroga and other leaders had called on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States to take measures to guarantee their safety.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. In the last five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. By the 19 January 2001, the United Nations Human Rights Office in Colombia had been informed of 26 massacres committed in 11 departments, and of more than 170 killings, most of them carried out by paramilitary groups.

In 1989 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. However, they continue to operate 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 concern for the safety of Victoria Delgado, who was reportedly abducted by paramilitaries on 16 May and whose whereabouts are now unknown;
- urging the authorities to do everything possible to find out where she is and guarantee her safety;
- expressing concern for the safety of inhabitants of El Paraíso, municipality of San Pablo, and urging the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by the community themselves to guarantee their safety;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the paramilitary incursion and threats against the inhabitants of El Paraíso, the killing of Uriel Arrieta, and the abduction of Victoria Delgado;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Bolívar Department, urging that the results 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 United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá
 COLOMBIA

Faxes: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351/286 74 34/ 286 68 42/284 21 86

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

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

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 1874/288 4906

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of the V Brigade

Comandante de la V Brigada
 General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval
 Calle 14, Carrera 33
 Bucaramanga, Santander,
 COLOMBIA

Faxes: +57 76 359 189 / 334 390

Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Commandante

COPIES TO:

National Advocate for the People

Sr. Defensor del Pueblo

Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 55, N°10-32/46

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 2 July 2001.