

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/057/2001

UA 138/01

Fear for safety/ Possible "disappearance"

5 June 2001

COLOMBIA

**Kimy Pernia DOMICO (m), Embera-Katio indigenous leader
Other members of Embera-Katio indigenous communities living
along the rivers Sinú and Verte in the department of Córdoba**

Kimy Pernia Domico, an indigenous leader from the department of Córdoba, has "disappeared" after he was reportedly abducted by army-backed paramilitaries. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

Three armed gunmen, thought to be army-backed paramilitaries belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Córdoba y Urabá*, (ACCU), United Self-Defence Groups of Córdoba and Urabá, reportedly abducted Kimy Pernia Domico in the municipality of Tierralta, department of Córdoba, on the evening of 2 June. He tried to flee, but was apparently forced onto a motorcycle at gunpoint. Two of his abductors rode with him on one motorcycle, while the third followed behind on another. As they rode towards the departmental capital of Montería, Kimy reportedly shouted "*me cogieron ... me llevan secuestrado*" ("They have me ... they have kidnapped me"). He attempted to escape once more, but was recaptured. He has not been seen since his abduction. Later that evening, other indigenous leaders reportedly informed the Colombian Minister of the Interior, Dr Armando Estrada Villa, of the abduction.

Kimy Pernia Domico is a leader of the Embera-Katio indigenous people, who live along the rivers Sinú and Verde in the department of Córdoba. He had been on his way home when he was abducted. Access to the indigenous communities has been cut off by an illegal paramilitary checkpoint in an area known as Colas del Embalse de Urrá. The checkpoint is operated by the ACCU, which reportedly maintains a strong presence in the Tierralta area. Although soldiers of the Colombian Army's XI Brigada (*Brigada XI*) are positioned a short distance from the checkpoint, they have made no apparent effort to dismantle the checkpoint and confront the paramilitaries.

The "disappearance" of Kimy Pernia has heightened concern for the safety of other members of the Embera-Katio indigenous communities in the Sinú and Verde areas, who have increasingly been caught up in the conflict. In recent years, several Embera-Katio indigenous communities campaigning against the construction of the Urrá Dam, which will destroy much of their ancestral lands, have been targeted by paramilitary forces working in alliance with the security forces. Community leaders have also been killed by Guerrilla forces, who have accused them of siding with the paramilitary or security forces. As recently as 22 May, the guerrilla forces the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, killed nine peasant farmers, who had been travelling along the Sinú River in the Zambudó area which is part of an indigenous community area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Given the fact that members of indigenous communities and people working with them are frequently targeted by paramilitary groups operating with the support of the security forces, as well as by guerrilla groups, the *Organización Indígena de Antioquia (IOA)*, Indigenous Organization of Antioquia, has declared the indigenous communities "neutral". However, such declarations have failed to make the two sides of the conflict respect the physical integrity of the indigenous civilian population, who continue to be the victims of human rights violations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Kimy Pernia Domico, who "disappeared" following his abduction on 2 June;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation to establish his whereabouts, and asking for his immediate release, if he is in detention;
- urging that those responsible for his possible abduction be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of other members of the Embera Katío communities along the rivers Sinú and Verde, urging that all measures deemed appropriate by the communities themselves are taken to guarantee their safety from paramilitary or guerrilla attack;
- urging that all those responsible for killings or "disappearances" in the area be brought to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Córdoba 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: + 571 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

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, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2022 (If the call is answered, say "Fax, por favor" and wait for the signal.)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Gómez Méndez / Estimado Dr.

Minister of Interior
 Sr. Armando Estrada Villa
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Palacio Echeverry
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960 / 286 8025 / 342 3201 / 281 5884

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of the XI Brigade
 General Jairo Ovalle Galvis
 Comandante de la XI Brigada
 Montería, Córdoba, COLOMBIA

COPIES TO:

National Human Rights Ombudsman
 Dr. José Fernando Castro Caicedo
 Defensor del Pueblo
 Defensoría del Pueblo
 Calle 55, No. 10-32/46
 Santafé de Bogotá

COLOMBIA

National Indigenous Organization

ONIC

AA 32395

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 17 July 2001.