

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/059/2003

05 September 2003

UA 262/03 Fear for safety/ "disappearances"

COLOMBIA	Jhon Jairo (also known as Yan) (m)]	
	"Cocho" (m)]	
	Muccyney Jair España (m), aged 34]	
	José Cicero Lopez (m)]] "Disappeared"
	María Yaneth Mosquera Guerra (f)]	
	Erasmo Pedraza Álvarez (m)]	
	Alvaro Enrique Vergara Muñoz (m)]	
	José Armando Garzón Rueda (m), community worker]	
	Frenyi Daniel Jiménez (m), dance and music teacher]	
	Julia Sierra (f), human rights defender]	
	Inhabitants of the El Chico and Provienda districts of Barrancabermeja		
	Human rights and trade union activists and community workers in Barrancabermeja		

In recent weeks army-backed paramilitaries in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander department, reportedly issued a "death list" of 15 youths El Chico and Provienda districts of the city, and forcibly abducted at least eight people. Their whereabouts are unknown. These threats and "disappearances" raise concerns for the safety of all inhabitants of these and other districts in Barrancabermeja.

On 27 August, bread salesman José Armando Garzón Rueda was at his home with his family in the La Esperanza neighbourhood of Barrancabermeja, when at 9.30am two members of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia reportedly knocked on his door and forced him out of his home. One of the men reportedly threatened José Armando Garzón Rueda's wife, Julia Sierra, at gunpoint. The two men then forced José Armando Garzón Rueda into a taxi and drove away. José Armando Garzón Rueda is a community activist and supports a community sports group in La Esperanza. Community and other social activists have frequently been accused of being guerrilla collaborators by army-backed paramilitaries. Such accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations. Julia Sierra is a member of the *Organización Femenina Popular*, (OFP), Popular Women's Organization, a women=s organization which has been systematically targeted by army-backed paramilitaries operating in the area.

On 25 August, army-backed paramilitaries reportedly forcibly abducted Alvaro Enrique Vergara Muñoz. On 24 August, María Yaneth Mosquera Guerra was reported to have been forcibly abducted from her workplace in the Nuevas Minas de Paraíso district of the city by members of the AUC. On the same day, the group reportedly abducted Erasmo Pedraza Alvarez from his home in the Provienda district. José Cicero López was reportedly abducted from his home in the La Paz district by the AUC on 22 August. The whereabouts of Muccyney Jair España, a tradesman, have been unknown since 21 August. On 18 August, Jhon Jairo and another man known as "Cocho" were forcibly abducted from their homes in the El Chico district of Barrancabermeja by gunmen who reportedly identified themselves as members of the AUC. The whereabouts of all these people remain unknown. As many as three others may also have "disappeared" during August.

Frenyi Daniel Jiménez, a dance and music teacher, has reportedly also been targeted by army-backed paramilitaries. He was allegedly forced out of his home in the Primero de Mayo district on 24 August by four AUC members and taken to the Miraflores district where he was interrogated and accused of being linked with guerrilla forces for carrying out artistic work with social and trade unions in the city. He was later

released, but Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of human rights defenders, trade union workers and community workers in Barrancabermeja.

According to local sources, the paramilitary death list, targeting youths in the El Chico and Provienda districts in northeast Barrancabermeja who are accused of links with guerrilla groups, began circulating in the area in August. There is no information on those named on the list. However, civilians living in Barrancabermeja have frequently been labeled subversive by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. In recent years paramilitaries have been able to operate unhindered in the city despite the fact that the city is heavily militarized and have committed serious human rights violations against civilians they accuse of being guerrilla collaborators.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of some eight people who have “disappeared” in recent weeks, reportedly after being abducted by army-backed paramilitaries;
- expressing concern for the safety of Frenyi Daniel Jiménez and Julia Sierra, who have reportedly been threatened by army-backed paramilitaries, and expressing concern at reports that a paramilitary death list is circulating in Barrancabermeja;
- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to establish the whereabouts of those who have “disappeared”, and to conduct an immediate and impartial investigation into the threats against Frenyi Daniel Jiménez and Julia Sierra, to make the results of the investigation public and to bring those responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take steps, deemed appropriate by those under threat, to guarantee the safety of civilians living in the El Chico and Provienda districts of the city following reports that the paramilitaries have prepared a death list of 15 inhabitants of these areas;
- urging the Colombian authorities to take steps, deemed appropriate by those under threat, to guarantee the safety of human rights activists with the OFP, trade unionists and other social activists, so that they can carry out their legitimate human rights work without fear of reprisal;
- expressing concern at the continued large-scale presence of army-backed paramilitary forces in the city of Barrancabermeja and surrounding areas despite the heavy military presence in the area;
- calling for full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Barrancabermeja, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- calling for immediate decisive action to confront and dismantle these groups in line with repeated UN recommendations and governmental commitments.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592 / 337 58 90

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

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Jorge Eliecer Gómez Villamizar, Gobernador del Departamento de Santander,
Gobernación de Santander, Calle 37, No. 10-30,
Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 842843

Salutation: Dear Governor Gómez Villamizar / Sr. Gobernador Gómez Villamizar

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalía General de la Nación
Diagonal 22B 52-01
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 /2017 (if someone answers say “me da tono de fax por favor por Dr Osorio”)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Women’s organization

Organización Femenina Popular

Cra 22 No 52B – 36

Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 October 2003.