

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Executions

14 October 1993

COLOMBIA;

Miguel LADINO, aged 75, peasant farmer
Miguel Antonio LADINO, aged 47
Julio César LADINO, aged 28
María Seneida LADINO (f), aged 33
Carmen Emilia LADINO (f), aged 29
Lucelly COLORADA DE LADINO (f), aged 16
Dora Estela GAVIRIA LADINO (f), aged 15
Mario MOLINA, aged 50 peasant farmer
Rita Edilia SUAZA DE MOLINA (f), aged 47
Ricardo MOLINA, aged 19
John Fredy MOLINA, aged 16
Luz Edelsi TUSARMA (f), aged 16
Hugo CEDEÑO LOZANO, aged 35

Amnesty International is deeply concerned by the apparent extrajudicial execution of the 13 people named above in Riofrío, Valle de Cauca department, by soldiers from the Puracé Battalion of the Colombia army.

According to information received, early on the morning of 6 October 1993 troops from the Palacé Battalion based in Buga, launched a counter-insurgency operation in the municipality of Riofrío. The rural community of Alto de la Loma was cordoned off by soldiers and houses searched. An elderly member of the Ladino family who survived the attack has told investigators that at 5.00 am hooded soldiers burst into their home and shut her in a room with the family's five children. She says that from the room she saw soldiers beating several members of the family and that the young women were raped and made to put on military style uniforms before they were all shot dead. Four members of the Molina family and Luz Edelsi Tusarma, the girlfriend of one of the Molina sons, were brought by the soldiers from their nearby home to the Ladino ranch where they were shot dead. Hugo Cedeño Lozano, a civilian who reportedly arrived with the troops, was also shot dead. He was previously unknown in the region.

Military commanders immediately claimed that the victims were members of the National Liberation Army, ELN, *Ejército Nacional de Liberación*, a guerrilla organization. According to the commander of the Palacé Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Luis Felipe Becerra Bohórquez, the 13 people died in a confrontation with his troops. However, this version has been contradicted by eye-witnesses to the attack who claim the victims were peasant farmers who only had rifles used for hunting in their homes and were unarmed when shot.

Lieutenant Colonel Becerra has been accused of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions. In 1988 a civilian court judge issued an arrest warrant against Lt. Colonel Becerra and two other army officers in connection with the murder of 21 banana plantation workers in Urabá, Antioquia department, in 1988. None of the three officers were placed under arrest and brought to trial. Shortly

afterwards Lt. Colonel Becerra was promoted.

The massacre of the seven men and six women in Riofrío is being investigated by a special unit from the Procurator General's office.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including torture, arbitrary arrest, "disappearance" and extrajudicial executions. President César Gaviria Trujillo has repeatedly pledged his government's commitment to protect human rights. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Peasant farmers living in areas where guerrilla forces are active are often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and have, as a result, been subjected to extrajudicial execution and other abuse. Often, the army has attempted to disguise extrajudicial executions as armed confrontation by dressing their victims with military-style uniforms. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

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

- expressing grave concern at the killing of the seven men and six women in Riofrío on 6 October 1993, allegedly by army personnel belonging to the Puracé Battalion;
- expressing concern that Lieutenant Colonel Luis Felipe Becerra Bohórquez has troops under his command despite accusations of very serious human rights violations levelled against him;
- urging that the investigations already started by the Procurators office be thorough and immediate, and that the results be made public;
- urging that those found responsible for the killings be brought to justice;
- urging that the Colombian government take all possible measures to protect the lives of the witnesses to these killings to ensure that they are able to carry on with their lives in peace.

APPEALS TO

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324/7434, 287 7937

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Gaviria

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla
Procurador General de la Nación
Procuraduría General

Edificio Banco Ganadero

Carrera 5, No. 15-80

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472

Salutation:Sr. Procurador de la Nación/Dear Dr. Arrieta

3) Minister of Defence

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda

Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Attorney General
Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 1 287 0939
Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff/Dear Dr. de Greiff

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Human Rights and Educational Organization
Señores
CINEP
AA 25916
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

2) Commander of the Palacé Battalion
Teniente Coronel Luis Felipe Becerra Bohórquez
Comandante del Batallón Palacé
Bugá, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

3) Commander of the army's Third Brigade
Brigadier General Rafael Hernández López
Comandante de la III Brigada
Avenida 4N, Calle 18 y 19
Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

4) Commander of the army's Third Division
Mayor General Jesus María Vergara Aragón
Comandante de la Cuarta División del Ejército
Villavicencio
Meta, 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 25 November 1993.