

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety

19 October 1995

COLOMBIA Civilian population of Segovia and Remedios, Antioquia

Marco Albeiro Valencia Duque, miner  
Gildardo Jesús Henao Fernández, street vendor  
Giovani Cárdenas

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There is serious concern for the safety of the civilian population in the municipalities of Segovia and Remedios, northeast Antioquia department, in the face of large-scale military and police operations combined with increased paramilitary activity in the area. Recent reports of threats, intimidation, detentions and torture have fuelled fears that extensive violations of fundamental human rights may occur as the security forces and their paramilitary allies pursue their counterinsurgency strategy.

These fears are based on the following apparently interrelated incidents in recent weeks. On 25 September a priest in Segovia was told over the telephone to prepare 200 coffins. Around the same date a local hospital was warned to be on alert, and the staff of a local school were told to evacuate their building.

On 28 September an armed confrontation took place in the vicinity between the army and guerrillas, followed by three explosions. On 1 October shooting was heard from inside the military base in Otú, 5 kilometres from Remedios.

After the latter incident, members of the army went into Remedios, firing their guns and shouting "*Llegó el ejército manada de hijoeputas*", "The army has arrived, you sons of bitches". The same day the army set up a checkpoint in Vereda Otú, stopped a minibus and frisked the passengers. On 2 October three armed men, in plainclothes and with their faces covered, were seen walking on the streets of Segovia. Also, in recent weeks, graffiti has appeared in Remedios with slogans such as "*Paramilitares en Remedios sí, guerrilleros asesinos no*", "Paramilitary groups in Remedios yes, guerrilla killers no".

There have also been incidents reported which have affected specific individuals. On 16 September Marco Albeiro Valencia Duque and three colleagues left a bar in Remedios. As they left they were detained and taken to Remedios police station. Two were released after a few hours, but Marco Albeiro Valencia is reported to have been stripped naked, beaten, had a grenade put in his mouth, and a gun put against his head. He alleges that a tape recorder was put in front of him while his companion was tortured in his full view. Marco Albeiro Valencia was asked if he was "Boris" (a guerrilla commander), and under pressure, he said yes. Before being released, he was forced to sign papers stating he had been treated humanely. On 23 September his house was surrounded by members of the army.

On 24 September Gildardo Jesús Henao Fernández was beaten in the street by a soldier. This followed several instances of him being stopped by members of both the police and army, during which he was accused of killing a police officer and of being a guerrilla.

On 30 September Giovani Cárdenas was detained for half an hour by two police officers and forced to play Russian roulette in the police station. During the past month he has suffered repeated acts of harassment and has been detained ten times, apparently because the police have mistaken him for a guerrilla informant with the same name.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In the past, in areas of Colombia where clashes between the armed forces and guerrillas have taken place, civilians have frequently become the target of serious human rights violations, including torture, arbitrary arrest, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. These violations have been carried out by members of the security forces and of paramilitary groups acting as auxiliaries or in complicity with the armed forces. Those labelled as guerrilla sympathizers are particularly at risk.

Despite repeated promises by President Samper to improve the human rights situation, including a commitment to end impunity for human rights violations, members of the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population of Segovia and Remedios, northeast Antioquia, in view of recent reports of threats and acts of intimidation carried out by members of the security forces and their paramilitary allies;
- urging that the authorities, at the highest level, publicly issue a speedy and clear order instructing the security forces operating in the department of Antioquia to fully respect fundamental human rights;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into the reported torture and ill-treatment by members of the security forces of Marco Albeiro Valencia Duque, Gildardo Jesús Henao Fernández and Giovanni Cárdenas, the results of which should be made public, and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the government to immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of the armed forces or with armed forces' complicity, and for members of such forces responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano  
 Presidente de la República  
 Palacio de Nariño, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 289 3377/286 7434**

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

2) Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Carlos Esguerra Portocarrero  
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

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

**Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874**

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

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe

Ministro del Interior  
Ministerio del Interior  
Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7  
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA  
**Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia**  
**Telexes:45406 MINGO CO**  
**Faxes:+ 57 1 286 6524/ 286 0053/ 286 0485**  
**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

**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 12 December 1995.