

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/64/96

UA 274/96 Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial executions 25 November 1996

COLOMBIA Residents of the Municipality of Granada, Antioquia

Fabián SUÁREZ GARCÍA, carpenter

Gerardo ALZATE, aged 65, peasant farmer

A 20-year-old man, name unknown

Recent paramilitary activities in the Municipality of Granada, Antioquia -including the possible extrajudicial executions of two men - have raised concern for the safety of local residents.

On 18 November, a group of armed civilians entered the home of Fabián Suárez García, a local carpenter who was at that time feeding his young daughters, and killed him on the spot. The gunmen then went to a petrol station in the outskirts of town, where they shot and seriously injured a 20-year-old man.

In the same place, upon the arrival of a bus from Medellín, they forced the driver to stop, told the passengers to lay on the floor, and killed Gerardo Alzate, a 65-year-old peasant farmer.

The armed men allegedly identified themselves to passengers on the bus as members of the *autodefensas de Urabá y Córdoba*, self-defence groups from Urabá and Córdoba. They said to have come to punish the town of Granada because its inhabitants were guerrilla collaborators. The paramilitary incursion followed the killing on 16 November of Fredy Alberto Vélez Garcés, Granada's Chief of Police, who was shot dead by presumed members of an armed opposition group as he was entering the mayor's office.

The arrival of the paramilitary to Granada is said to have been announced beforehand by members of the Colombian army's *Batallón No.4 de Contraguerrilla "Granaderos"*, Counter Guerrilla Battalion No.4 "Granaderos", who conducted counterinsurgency operations in the area from the end of October until the 11 November 1996.

During the counterinsurgency operations, residents complained of repeated abuses by the soldiers, including the illegal detention of adults and children; death threats to children unless they revealed information about the whereabouts of guerrillas; breaking into houses and stealing property, and accusing people of collaborating with guerrilla groups. The military are said to have warned repeatedly that paramilitary groups would start operating in the area, since those groups could do what they - as members of the public forces - could not do.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit widespread and systematic human rights abuses throughout the country. Despite government statements promising to dismantle paramilitary groups, paramilitary activity is on the increase, and few if any of those responsible are brought to justice. The vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for such crimes remain in active service.

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

- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of the municipality of Granada, Antioquia;
- expressing concern at the apparent extrajudicial execution by members of a paramilitary group of Fabián Suárez García and Gerardo Alzate, and the wounding of an unidentified 20-year-old man on November 1996;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the events, for the results to be made public and those responsible to be brought to justice;

Also if possible:

- urge 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 to bring to justice members of such forces responsible for human rights violations,.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Carrera 8 No. 7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 289 3377 / 286 7434 / 287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Calle 35 No. 4-31
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 287 0939 or 288 2828

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
 Santafé de Bogotá
 COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Fax:+ 57 1 281 5884/286 0053

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

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, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Corporación Jurídica Libertad, Apartado Aéreo 49027, Medellín 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 31 December 1996.