

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death threats / Extrajudicial Executions

26 August 1994

COLOMBIA

Marcos TAUTIVA, tradesman

Omar VALBUENA, builder and butcher

Miguel OSPINA, farmer

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of civilians in the municipality of Buga, Valle department, including those living in the communities of La Alaska, Diamante, La Habana and La Magdalena. They report that they have recently been receiving anonymous death threats, particularly against community leaders. Their fears have been heightened by the killing on 14 August 1994 of Marcos Tautiva, Omar Valbuena and Miguel Ospina, reportedly by a recently formed paramilitary group which may be acting with the cooperation of the Colombian armed forces.

The multiple killing occurred at 1am on 14 August, when the men were boarding a vehicle in the community of La Magdalena to go to La Alaska. During the attack there was a cut of both power and telephone lines. Afterwards, the word "COLSINGUE" was found graffitied on walls next to the scene of the attack. "COLSINGUE" is the acronym of the recently-formed paramilitary group *Colombia Sin Guerrillas*, "Colombia Without Guerrillas", whose self-declared aim is to eliminate members of subversive groups in Colombia and those they consider to be associated with them. (Please refer to UA 299/94, AMR 23/63/94, issued after the killing of trades union leaders claimed by COLSINGUE in another part of the country).

A few hours after Marcos Tautiva, Omar Valbuena and Miguel Ospina were killed, local inhabitants were surprised to observe that the police assigned to the police post at La Magdalena were changed.

The armed opposition group Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)* is known to operate in the area which, as a result, is heavily militarized. Local people were aware that armed men, believed to be FARC guerrillas, occasionally crossed their land and had been seen crossing land above La Alaska which belonged to Marcos Tautiva, a tradesman who usually lived in Cali, the capital of Valle. Omar Valbuena was La Alaska's builder and butcher and a member of the community action group (*Junta de Acción Communal*). Miguel Ospina was a farmer and had recently moved to La Magdalena from La Alaska.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite repeated government pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian and security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Many paramilitary groups have their origins in the civilian "self-defence" squads which the army created in the 1980s to act as auxiliaries during counter-insurgency operations. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the Colombia armed forces to combat and disband such groups, paramilitary forces have continued to kill and "disappear" perceived opponents with impunity in many areas of the country and continue to work with the support of the security forces. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, made several promises, both during his election campaign

and subsequently, to improve the human rights situation. His promises include a commitment to dismantle paramilitary forces.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of civilians Marcos Tautiva, Omar Valbuena and Miguel Ospina on 14 August 1994;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into these deaths, the results of which should be made public and those found responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the death threats received by civilians living in the communities of La Alaska, Diamante, La Habana and La Magdalena in Buga municipality and urging that all possible measures be taken to protect them, particularly in the context of these killings;
- urging that the government should immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of the armed forces or with armed forces' complicity. Members of such forces responsible for human rights violations should 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 Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472

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

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño
 Defensor del Pueblo
 Defensoría del Pueblo
 Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo, Bogota, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 288 6683

Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño

4) Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874 or 288 4906
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Andean Commission of Jurists
Comisión Andina de Juristas
AA 58533
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 7 October 1994.