

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Torture/death threats

20 November 1992

COLOMBIA:

Wilson MÉNDEZ
and one other, name not known to Amnesty International

Amnesty International has learned with concern of the reported torture of two men, Wilson Méndez and another, whose name is not known to the organization, following their detention by the Colombian armed forces in the town of Doncello, in the southern department of Caquetá, on 26 October 1992.

According to information received, Wilson Méndez and his companion were detained by members of the armed forces on suspicion of being guerrillas following an attack on the town by the armed opposition group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. They were taken to the base of the Florencia Battalion, Batallón Florencia, where they were reportedly subjected to torture. Wilson Méndez was shot in both legs in events which remain unclear. Reportedly as a result of protests by the local population, they were transferred to the local hospital, Hospital María Inmaculada, to be treated for their injuries. Wilson Méndez underwent an operation on both legs for fractures caused by the gunshot injuries.

Eye-witnesses report that whilst they were still in hospital the soldiers guarding them attacked them in their beds, beating them with the butts of their guns, rebreaking Wilson Méndez' legs. Medical personnel intervened to stop the guards and reportedly received death threats as a result of their actions. Relatives of the two men have also received threats by paramilitary groups working with the army.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In September 1991 the Procurator General's office produced an official report which stating that more than 2,300 complaints had been lodged against the army and police in the last two years for human rights violations. President César Gaviria Trujillo, on presenting the report, stated:

"The government cannot fail to recognise the seriousness of the accusations made constantly and on a massive scale against its agents, nor ignore the extent of impunity in cases of human rights violations".

"No puede el Gobierno desconocer la gravedad de las acusaciones que se hacen en forma reiterada y masiva contra sus agentes, ni ignorar hasta que punto reina la impunidad por violación de derechos humanos."

However, despite the government's declared commitment to uphold respect for human rights, members of the Colombian armed and security forces continue to commit serious abuses, including torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" with virtual impunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters

either in Spanish, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the reported torture in detention of Wilson Méndez and another man who were both detained by the armed forces in Doncello, Caquetá, on 26 October 1992;

- expressing further concern at reports that the two men were severely beaten by their army guards whilst receiving hospital treatment for their injuries and that hospital staff were reportedly threatened when they intervened on behalf of the injured men;

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- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into both these events and that the results be made public and those found responsible brought to justice;

- urging that the government take all possible measures to protect the two men, their relatives and also the medical staff.

APPEALS TO

1) Minister of Defence

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

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

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

2) Attorney General:

Dr. Gustavo de Greiff
Fiscal General
Fiscalia General
Hotel Orquidea Real
Carrera 7, No 32-16
Santa Fe de Bogotá
Colombia

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. de Greiff/
Dear Dr. de Greiff**

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia
Faxes: + 57 287 0939

3) 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

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

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 41213 PGNDP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

4) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr.

Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia
**Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá,
Colombia**

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066, + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937

**Presidente/
Dear President Gaviria**

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño

Defensor del Pueblo

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 34, Carrera 5

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

National Human Rights Group:

ANDAS

AA 3511

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 1 January 1993.