

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 327/94 Fear of "disappearance"

7 September 1994

COLOMBIA Manuel Guillermo OMEARA MIRAVAL, aged 32, farm administrator

Manuel Guillermo Omeara Miraval has not been seen since he was abducted by armed men on 27 August 1994 and there is serious concern for his safety.

Witnesses state that Manuel Omeara Miraval was travelling by motorcycle between "San Miguel" farm where he works as an administrator and the town of San Martín, Cesar department, when he was intercepted by a group of armed men in military camouflage uniforms who forced him into their vehicle and drove off in the direction of San Martín. One of the men followed with his motorcycle. Local people report that for several days previously the vehicle had been seen close to where the abduction took place.

On 28 January 1994 Manuel Omeara Miraval's father, Noel Omira Omeara Carrascal, was shot and fatally wounded. He died on 26 August as a result of his injuries. Local people believe that the attack was carried out by individuals working for a paramilitary group of about thirty men operating in the area, reportedly with the cooperation of the Police Anti-kidnapping and Extorsion Unit, *Unidad Antiextorsion y Secuestro, UNASE*. The vehicle used in the abduction of Manuel Omeara Miraval was recognised as belonging to the leader of this same paramilitary group.

Guerrilla groups operating in the area have denied holding Manuel Omeara Miraval and the security forces have also denied his detention. His whereabouts remain unknown and there is serious concern for his safety. His family have denounced his abduction to regional authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is intense guerrilla activity in this region of Cesar department and, as a result, a high presence there of both military and army-backed paramilitary groups. 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.

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

- expressing concern at the violent abduction and possible "disappearance" of Manuel Guillermo Omeara Miraval on 27 August 1994 and urging that there be an immediate inquiry into his whereabouts;
- urging that if he is in detention, that he be humanely treated and allowed access to his lawyer and to relatives;

- urging that if in detention, that he be charged with a recognizable criminal offence or immediately released;

- 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 1 342 9723

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

3) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 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 Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

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 19 October 1994.