

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/075/01

8 August 2001

Further information on UA 102/01 (AMR 23/045/2001, 19 April 2001) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA Civilian inhabitants of rural communities in the municipality of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department

New names: Civilian inhabitants of the Alto and Bajo Naya regions, Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments

The navy are reported to have withdrawn from the Bajo Naya region, which is often a prelude to a paramilitary attack on the civilian population. Army-backed paramilitaries have reportedly moved into the neighbouring Alto Naya region, and ordered local people to leave, although the area is still ostensibly under the control of the army.

The Alto (high) and Bajo (low) Naya regions are the mountainous and lowland areas that surround the River Naya, which separates Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments, before it runs into the Pacific.

Despite the presence of the III Brigade of the Army (*III Brigada del Ejército*) in Alto Naya, paramilitary contingents have reportedly arrived in four municipalities: Santander del Quilichao, Timba, Buenos Aires and Suárez. They have reportedly threatened local peasant farmers and given the communities until 10 August to abandon the area.

The paramilitaries who went into Puerto Merizalde in May 2001, threatened the inhabitants and said that they would return. The navy's II Marine Infantry Brigade (*II Brigada de Infantería de Marina*) reportedly withdrew from the Bajo Naya region on 26 July. Amnesty International delegates visiting the Bajo Naya region saw that the Puerto Merizalde navy post was abandoned.

Paramilitaries massacred at least 32 peasant farmers in Timba and Buenos Aires in April. After the massacre the army captured a number of paramilitaries in relation to the massacre, and this was widely publicised, but the authorities have taken no decisive action to protect the civilian communities of the region. Before the massacre they had been warned repeatedly that an attack was imminent, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had asked them on 3 April to take precautionary measures, but the security forces made no apparent effort to prevent the attack.

Two hundred indigenous people were forced to flee their homes by the April massacre, and are now sheltering in Santander del Quilichao. They plan to return to their homes on 10 and 11 August. Amnesty International is concerned that the paramilitaries may prevent them from returning, and may subject them to further serious human rights violations, forcing more people to flee their homes.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the indigenous and afro-Colombian communities living along the River Naya, in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments, who have reportedly been threatened by army-backed paramilitaries, and of the 200 forcibly displaced indigenous people due to return to their lands on 10 and 11 August;

- urging the authorities to take action to protect the civilian population, expressing concern at reports that the navy has withdrawn from Bajo Naya;
- expressing concern that paramilitaries have reportedly ordered local people to leave the Alto Naya municipalities of Santander del Quilichao, Timba, Buenos Aires and Suárez by 10 August, and asking the authorities to investigate this and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Presidente, Bogotá, Colombia**Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 336 2109 / 337 1351****Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente**Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO****Fax: + 57 1 286 4126 / 281 1213 / 222 1874****Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro**Commander of the III Brigade of the Colombian Army (in charge of Alto Naya region)

Comandante III Brigada del Ejército Nacional

General Francisco Rene Pedraza

Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante, III Brigada Ejército, Cali**Fax: +57 2 330 7161 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Comandante**Commander of the II Brigade of the Colombian Navy (in charge of Bajo Naya region)

Comandante II Brigada de Infantería de Marina

Capitán de Navío Francisco Chilito Rodriguez_

Comando Segunda Brigada,

Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante, II Brigada Marina, Buenaventura**Fax: +57 2 2434938 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")****Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Comandante****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 18 September 2001.