

PUBLIC

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Possible "Disappearance" / Fear for Safety 2 October 1998

COLOMBIA Roberto ANTONIO (possible "disappearance")  
His family (fear for safety)

Other members of the forcibly displaced community of La Balsita, municipality  
of Dabeiba, Antioquia Department

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Roberto Antonio who has not been seen since he was reportedly forcibly abducted in the municipality of Dabeiba, department of Antioquia, on 29 September 1998. His "disappearance", together with a continued paramilitary presence in the area, also raises concerns for the safety of others living in the municipality.

Roberto Antonio's abduction, at the hands of gunmen thought to be members of a paramilitary group, took place despite a recently increased and heavy military presence in the area as a result of an incursion earlier in the week by the armed opposition group: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Roberto Antonio was reportedly taken from his home, in the Héctor Cárdenas district of Dabeiba, severely beaten, tied up and then forced onto a motorcycle. Members of the same group responsible later returned, firing shots at his home and demanding to know the whereabouts of his wife.

Roberto Antonio and his family are displaced members of the community of La Balsita, in the municipality of Dabeiba, who were forced from their homes during joint paramilitary/armed force operations in the area in 1997.

Members of the security forces and their paramilitary allies frequently accuse those forcibly displaced of being guerrilla collaborators or sympathizers, accusations which are often followed by serious human rights violations.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Despite the Colombian Government's suspension of the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and, in 1989, directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups, they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country. No effective steps have, as yet, been taken by the authorities to control their actions or to hold members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations. In addition, President Andrés Pastrana, who took office on 8 August this year, have failed to take effective steps to tackle the country's long running human rights crisis.

According to the Attorney General, more than 200 outstanding arrest warrants, issued to alleged paramilitary members responsible for human rights violations, have still not been acted upon by the security forces.

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

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Roberto Antonio on 29 September 1998, reportedly by members of a paramilitary organization, and expressing

concern for the safety of his wife, family and other forcibly displaced people of La Balsita in the municipality of Dabeiba;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the "disappearance" of Roberto Antonio, that the results be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;

- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by the displaced communities in the municipality of Dabeiba themselves, are taken to guarantee their safety;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area and urging that those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;

- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments;

- reminding Colombia's new government of the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana**

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,  
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartheid Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

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

**Faxes: + 571 570 2017**

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, 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:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace,

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, 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 31 October 1998.

**"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person"**

Article

3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>