

UA 386/94

Fear for Safety / Extrajudicial Execution 26 October 1994**COLOMBIA**Inhabitants of El Paramo, El Carmen municipality, Norte de Santander
Lorgio Antonio GARCÍA

The village of El Paramo is being terrorized by members of the Colombian army and army-backed paramilitary forces. Reports indicate that the latter have extrajudicially executed one villager, Lorgio Antonio García, and there are now serious fears for the safety of the other inhabitants.

Sources state that early on 1 October 1994 a group of about 13 heavily-armed men, four wearing army uniforms, arrived in El Paramo, identifying themselves as members of the armed forces. At 6am these paramilitaries set up a checkpoint on the road to the village, stopping every vehicle that passed and checking the identity of occupants against a list they held.

Amongst those stopped were Lorgio Antonio García and his brother, whose name is not known. The paramilitaries reportedly told Antonio García to go and look for guerrillas, stating that they would hold his brother hostage until he provided the required information. Eye-witnesses state that when Antonio García attempted to run away he was shot dead. Throughout this incident, the armed men remained in constant radio contact with what appeared to be the Colombian army.

At approximately 1pm on the same day, the paramilitaries were attacked by guerrillas and four were killed. Two other paramilitaries forced a local taxi driver to drive them from the scene. At 7pm, soldiers arrived, setting up an official checkpoint between the villages of El Paramo and Otaré, searching all the houses in the villages and threatening the occupants. According to eye-witnesses, the two paramilitaries were detained by the soldiers at the checkpoint.

On 2 October, various local authorities arrived, including the local ombudsman, *Personero Municipal*, Police Inspector, *Inspector de Policía*, and an army patrol from El Carmen. Paramo villagers identified one of the soldiers in the patrol as being one of the paramilitaries from the previous day. This individual proceeded to threaten the villagers, calling them guerrillas and telling one woman that she would not leave the village alive.

On 3 October, soldiers fired shots at the houses of Paramo inhabitants Ramón Díaz and Samuel Pineda and searched them. They destroyed the doors of Samuel Pineda's house, stole electrical goods, destroyed property and killed domestic animals. On leaving, they took the identity card of Samuel Pineda's wife, Gloria Alvarado and left a note, referring to Samuel Pineda as a "son-of-a-bitch guerrilla", "*guerrilla hijueputa*".

When Lorgio Antonio García's family went to his home to collect his personal possessions, the army captain effectively prevented them from entering by telling them that the army had mined the house, "*el lugar lo tenemos minado*". The family were too frightened to enter.

As a result of the terror, ten families, including children and elderly people, have abandoned their homes and land in El Paramo. The army has now set up a base in the village.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is intense guerrilla activity in this region 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 or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the killing of Lorgio Antonio García on 1 October 1994 in circumstances suggesting he was extrajudicially executed by paramilitaries working with the Colombian armed forces;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into his death, the results of which should be made public and those found responsible brought to justice, and inquiring whether the two paramilitaries detained by soldiers at the checkpoint in El Paramo have been charged in relation to the killing;
- expressing concern for the safety of the civilians living in El Paramo in the context of the violent and threatening behaviour of the soldiers now based in El Paramo and urging that all possible measures be taken to protect them;
- urging, furthermore, that immediate steps be taken to dismantle all paramilitary forces in accordance with President Samper's electoral promises and that full and impartial investigations be undertaken into links between paramilitary and security forces, the results of which should be made public.

APPEALS TO1) 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

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) 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

3) 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 1874/288 4906/228 1874
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Alternative Legal Association
Señores, 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 6 December 1994.