

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/82/98

UA 276/98 Fear for safety / "Disappearance" / Extrajudicial execution

27 October 1998

COLOMBIA

"Disappeared": Víctor Velásquez, Jesús Libardo Duque and possibly 13 others

Killed: Raúl Abad, Jesús María Urrego Gómez, Mariano Bedoya Velásquez, Manuel

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On 25 October 1998, a paramilitary force attacked the town of San Carlos and its surrounding villages, in the municipality of San Carlos in the east of Antioquia Department. The 10 members of the civilian population named above

were reportedly summarily executed and as many as 15 others were abducted. There is grave concern for the safety of those who were abducted as their whereabouts remain unknown.

According to information received, on the afternoon of 24 October a heavily armed, 100-strong paramilitary force belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-defence Forces of Colombia, set up a road block outside the town of San Carlos, effectively stopping all traffic from entering the town. In the early hours of 25 October the paramilitary force entered the town and shot dead the 10 civilians named above and forcibly abducted Víctor Velásquez, Jesús Libardo Duque and possibly 13 others whose names were on a *lista negra*, 'black list' in their possession. 'Black lists' contain the names of civilians considered by paramilitary forces to be guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators. Those whose names are included in such lists are frequently killed.

There is also concern for the safety of the civilian population living in villages around the town of San Carlos where the paramilitary force is reported to have carried out simultaneous attacks.

Despite the fact that the area is heavily-militarized, no apparent effort was made by the army to confront the paramilitary force which reached the town in seven pickup trucks.

Rumours of an impending paramilitary attack began to circulate in San Carlos on 25 September 1998 when a helicopter flew over the region, dropping leaflets warning the inhabitants of the eastern Antioquia municipalities of San Carlos, San Luis, Cocorná, Granada, San Francisco and San Vicente that forces of the AUC would be coming to kill all guerrilla collaborators. At the beginning of October, a commission made up of local municipal authorities travelled to Medellín, the department capital, to seek increased protection for their community from the authorities.

#### **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 has yet 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 for the safety of Víctor Velásquez, Jesús Libardo Duque and possibly 13 other members of the civilian population of San Carlos, Antioquia

Department, who were reportedly abducted by a paramilitary force on 25 October 1998;

- expressing grave concern at the reported summary execution of 10 civilians named above by the paramilitary force in the attack on San Carlos;
- calling for appropriate measures to be taken to protect the civilian populations of the municipalities of San Carlos, San Luis, Cocorná, Granada, San Francisco and San Vicente in Antioquia Department;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killings and the "disappearances", that the whereabouts of the "disappeared" be established, that the results of the investigation be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- 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**

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**

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

Dr. Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia  
Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia**

**Fax: + 574 381 1342**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Attorney General, Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,  
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,  
AA 29855, 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 8 December 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>