

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 181/98 (AMR 23/44/98, 19 June 1998) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Human rights defenders, members of the displaced communities and those working on their behalf in the Department of Meta

There is renewed concern that paramilitary groups intend to carry out attacks on displaced civilian communities residing in the department of Meta. There is particular concern that human rights defenders and others working on behalf of the displaced communities may be singled out for attack.

It has recently been learned that, between 1 and 3 of October 1998, in Villavicencio, the capital of Meta Department, and nearby Ciudad Porfía in the same municipality, paramilitary forces distributed leaflets and graffitied walls with threats of their intention to kill those they suspect of being guerrilla auxiliaries or sympathizers. The paramilitaries appear to belong to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-defence Forces of Colombia.

Fears are heightened following an AUC attack on the town of San Carlos, and surrounding villages in Antioquia Department, on 25 October in which ten people were reportedly summarily executed and up to 15 others abducted. About a month earlier, leaflets were similarly distributed threatening the AUC's impending arrival with intent to kill all "guerrilla collaborators". No apparent effort was made by nearby army forces to prevent the attack.

The threatened communities are made up of people forcibly displaced from Mapiripán and Puerto Alvira towns in Meta where paramilitary forces were responsible for carrying out mass killings over the previous two years (see UA 228/97, AMR 23/50/97, 22 July 1997 and UA 144/98, AMR 23/27/98, 6 May 1998).

People who have been forcibly displaced by the long-running civil conflict in Colombia, and those that work on their behalf, are frequently labelled guerrilla sympathizers by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Many have become victims of serious human rights violations as a result.

Despite receiving advance warning of impending paramilitary attacks in the past, the authorities have so far failed to take effective measures to guarantee the safety of the civilian populations under threat.

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

- expressing concern at paramilitary threats to attack displaced communities in Villavicencio and Ciudad Porfía, department of Meta;
- expressing concern that human rights defenders and others working with displaced communities may be the intended target of such an incursion;
- calling on the authorities to take any steps deemed appropriate by those at risk to protect the threatened communities and human rights defenders;
- 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 the Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior

Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0053

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Governor of Department of Meta

Señor Alan Jara, Gobernador del Departamento de Meta

Gobernación del Meta, Carrera 33 No. 38-45, Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia

Telegrams: Gobernador de Meta, Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 866 25424 (if voice answers ask: "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Jara / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

Grupo de Apoyo a Organizaciones de Desplazados (GAD)

Calle 61# 13-54, piso 4, 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 9 December 1998.

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

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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