

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/90/00

UA 340/00 Fear for Safety/Possible Extrajudicial Executions/"Disappearances" 6 November

COLOMBIA Osvaldo BUITRAGO PRADILLA

Rodrigo BUITRAGO PRADILLA

Killed: Francisco Javier CASTRO JAIMES

Luis Arturo PÉREZ OSORIO

Johel Jaime SUAREZ

Ramiro NIÑO ARDILA

Jairo Alonso SUAREZ MORANTES

Carlos Alberto SUAREZ ARDILA

Donato SUAREZ SÁNCHEZ

At least seven people have been killed in a paramilitary raid on the city of Barrancabermeja, in Santander department. The army-backed paramilitaries reportedly abducted the two brothers named above, who have not been seen since.

A group of about 50 gunmen reportedly entered the city at about 4am on 4 November. They moved through the southeast of the city, killing the men named above. The gunmen reportedly ordered two taxi drivers to take five of the bodies to an undertaker. They wore armbands of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia.

In the Alto del Campestre district the gunmen apparently abducted Osvaldo Buitrago Pradilla and his brother Rodrigo.

Local people called the police, who later claimed to have killed one paramilitary and captured two. The army, however, apparently took no action during the raid, although it reportedly lasted two hours, and even though a battalion of the Fifth Brigade, the *Batallón Nueva Granada*, has a heavy presence in the city.

It is two-and-a-half years since a paramilitary raid on Barrancabermeja drew international condemnation. Seven people were killed during the May 1998 raid, and 25 "disappeared" (See *Barrancabermeja: A City under Siege*, AI Index: AMR 23/36/99, May 1999 for details of this and other attacks on the town). Since then, however, the authorities have taken no action against either the paramilitary groups operating in the region, or the elements within the security forces who collaborate with them. As this latest raid has shown, official inaction has left civilians at risk.

For their part the guerrilla organisations *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army, have reportedly killed numerous civilians in Barrancabermeja, whom they considered to be collaborating with the security forces or the paramilitaries.

Since the start of this year at least 410 inhabitants of Barrancabermeja are believed to have been killed by either paramilitaries or guerrilla groups.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of civilians in Barrancabermeja in the light of the 4 November paramilitary raid and the repeated killings of civilians by both guerrilla forces and paramilitaries throughout 2000;

- expressing concern that the government has taken no real action against paramilitary groups in the Barrancabermeja area, despite their own commitments and UN recommendations to combat and dismantle these groups;
- urging full and impartial investigations into the raid, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of Osvaldo Buitrago Pradilla and his brother Rodrigo, who were reportedly abducted during the raid, and urging the authorities to do everything possible to find them and ensure that they are safe;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Santander, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to combat and dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

In your correspondence you should acknowledge violations of international humanitarian law by guerrilla forces but underline that these violations cannot and should not be used as an excuse for inaction by the state in combatting and dismantling paramilitary groups, ensuring that any links with the security forces are advanced and that those responsible for human rights violations are brought to justice.

Please also raise these concerns with your own government.

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

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939/284 2186/337 1351/289 3377

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Vice-President of the Republic

Señor Vicepresidente Gustavo Bell Lemus

Alto Consejero Presidencial para asuntos de Derechos Humanos y lucha Contra la Corrupción

Cra. 8 #7-26, Palacio de Nariño, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax:+ 571 337 1351

Salutation: Dear Vice-President / Excmo. Sr Vicepresidente

Commander of the V Brigade of the Colombian Army

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval

Comandante de la V Brigada

Calle 14, Carrera 33

Bucaramanga

Santander

Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 455051/76 351493

Salutation: Sr. General

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organisation

CREDHOS
AA 505
Barrancabermeja
Santander
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 December 2000.