

UA 238/01

Fear for**COLOMBIA Segundo Salinas (m)****César Chaverra (m)****Rubén Rentería (m)****Inés Blandón (f)****Other members of San Francisco de Asís, Natividad de María and Nuestra Señora del Carmen Peace Communities of Chocó department**

Paramilitary gunmen have killed four members of the Pueblo Nuevo and Puerto Lleras hamlets, which belong to the San Francisco de Asís "Peace Community", in the northwestern department of Chocó. Amnesty International is concerned that the inhabitants of this and other "Peace Communities" as well as other recently returned displaced communities in the region are in grave danger.

Amnesty International has received reports that on 12 September 2001 around 170 heavily-armed men who said they were members of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, some reportedly dressed in military uniforms bearing army insignia, entered the Puerto Lleras Community and seized Segundo Salinas, César Chaverra and Rubén Rentería from their homes, accusing them of being guerrilla collaborators. They reportedly killed Segundo Salinas and César Chaverra using garrotes, beating them with rocks and stabbing them in the head. They reportedly struck Rubén Rentería in the head with a machete and later decapitated him.

Later that morning the AUC paramilitaries reportedly entered the Pueblo Nuevo Community firing guns and throwing grenades. Inés Blandón was reportedly killed while she was washing in the River Jiguiamiandó with other women and children, who fled towards the nearby mountain. Among those who fled was a 16-year-old boy who has not returned.

The gunmen reportedly robbed both communities of the clothes and food in their homes. When leaving the communities the men reportedly shouted that the inhabitants should leave the area - that it was a "disputed territory" (*territorio de disputa*, implying that it was an area of conflict between the security forces and armed opposition groups).

In recent months there have been several paramilitary incursions in the area during which the paramilitaries have ordered the communities to abandon their lands. Members of these returned displaced communities have frequently been labelled guerrilla collaborators. Guerrilla forces maintain a strong presence in the region. Such accusations have been followed by serious human rights violations including extrajudicial executions and "disappearances" committed by army-backed paramilitaries. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for arbitrary killings and threats against members of these communities they have accused of siding with their enemies. Despite all this the people of the "Peace Communities", who were forced to flee the fighting in the region four years ago, say that they want to remain on their lands.

These killings heighten concerns for the safety of the people of San Francisco de Asís, as well as the recently returned forcibly displaced communities of Cacarica, who have also been threatened by army-backed paramilitaries who are converging on the area despite the large security force presence (see UA 136/01, AMR 23/055/01, 4 June 2001). The "Peace Communities" and the communities of the Cacarica River Basin have called on both sides in the conflict to respect

their right to life and their right as civilians not to be drawn into the conflict.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The San Francisco de Asís Peace Community was set up in October 1997, by 49 displaced communities who wanted to return to their homes in Chocó department. They were backed by the Diocese of Apartadó and the Colombian non-governmental organization *Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular* (CINEP), Research and Popular Education Centre. They declared the establishment of the Peace Community after reaching agreements with the government that the security forces would guarantee the safety and security of the areas to which they would return. They asked armed groups to respect the boundaries of the communities and not enter them. Further Peace Communities were set up between December 1998 and February 1999, backed by CINEP and the Parish of Riosucio. Among these are Natividad de María (about 105 families) and Nuestra Señora del Carmen (about 250 families). (For more information see AI report: *Colombia: Return to Hope*, AMR 23/23/00, June 2000).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the 12 September killing of San Francisco de Asís Peace Community members Segundo Salinas, César Chaverra, Rubén Rentería, Inés Blandón, and into recent attacks on Peace Communities in the region;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the San Francisco de Asís, Natividad de María and Nuestra Señora del Carmen Peace Communities in Chocó, and urging the authorities to take all measures that the communities themselves deem appropriate to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Chocó, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and UN recommendations.

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

Faxes: + 57 1 566 2071

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministro de Defensa Nacional

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Centro Administrativo Nacional

Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52, OFI 217

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 0059

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Governor of the Department of Chocó
Sr. William Halaby Córdoba
Gobernador del Departamento del Chocó
Gobernación del Chocó
Quibdó, Chocó, Colombia

Fax: + 57 4 971 1777

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental organisation
Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP)
AA 25916
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 2001.