

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/103/2002

10 September 2002

Further information on UA 221/01 (AMR 23/085/01, 5 September 2001) and follow-up (AMR 23/111/2001, 2 November 2001, AMR 23/027/2002, 25 February 2002) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA Pablo Javier Arenales (m)]

José Guillermo Larios (m)] human rights activists

Yaneth Rubio Rodríguez (f)]

Diana Marcela Gallego (f) and her family

Diana Garcia (f)

and other members of REINICIAR

Francisco Campo (m), human rights activist

and other members of the non-governmental organization *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation

in Barrancabermeja, department of Santander

new name: Miguel Cifuentes (m), leader of *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (A.C.V.C.), Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, Magdalena Medio region, department of Santander

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Pablo Javier Arenales and Miguel Cifuentes and other human rights defenders and political activists in the department of Santander following reliable information that army-backed paramilitaries have announced their intention to kill the two men within in a month.

According to information received, members of the non-governmental organization *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation, have been informed through a very reliable source that the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia is planning to kill Pablo Javier Arenales, a member of the board of CREDHOS, and Miguel Cifuentes, a board member of the *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (A.C.V.C.), Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, who is also a CREDHOS member.

A person with contacts within the paramilitary told CREDHOS members about possible paramilitary plans to kill Pablo Javier Arenales and Miguel Cifuentes before the end of September. They were also reportedly informed that paramilitaries planned to kill Pablo Javier Arenales around the middle of August, but were prevented from doing so thanks to the international accompaniment being given to him by Peace Brigades International.

It is believed that the AUC's objectives in carrying out these attacks is to dismantle what they consider to be "guerrilla organizations", such as CREDHOS. Since the end of 2000, the AUC have been able to maintain a large presence in Barrancabermeja. They have often labelled CREDHOS, other human rights activists, trade unionists and popular activists in Barrancabermeja as guerrilla collaborators. These accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations. The seriousness of these threats and violations have prompted the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to urge the Colombian government for special protection measures for all CREDHOS members. Since the increasing presence of the AUC in the region, seven social and human

rights organizations have been forced to close down and human rights activists were forced to leave the region.

At present, there is no further information on the other human rights defenders named above.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Pablo Javier Arenales and Miguel Cifuentes, other CREDHOS and A.C.V.C workers and human rights activists, trade unionists and popular activists in the department of Santander following reports of paramilitary threats against them;
- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, are taken to guarantee their safety;
- urging that full and impartial investigations into these threats are undertaken, that the results are made public and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- urging full and impartial investigations into links between the security forces and paramilitary forces in Barrancabermeja and surrounding areas are undertaken, that the results are made public and that those members of the security forces responsible for operating in unison with paramilitary forces or supporting them are brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the continued large-scale presence of AUC forces in Barrancabermeja despite the heavy military presence in the city and urging immediate decisive action to confront and dismantle these groups in line with repeated UN recommendations and governmental commitments

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 571 3420592**

**Salutation: Dear President Uribe / Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe**

Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia

Vicepresidente de la República de Colombia

Dr. Francisco Campos Calderón

Vicepresidencia

Carrera 8A No 5-57

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Vice-Presidente Bell, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 334 1138**

**Salutation : Excelentísimo Sr. Vicepresidente/ Dear Vice-President**

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Dr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos

Ministro del Interior y Justicia, Ministerio del Interior y Justicia,

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.,

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Telegram: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 599 8404/ 571 5664573**

**Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro**

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

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 22 October 2002.