

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

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**UA 34/92      Possible Extrajudicial Execution**

**31 January 1992**

**COLOMBIA:      Blanca Cecilia VALERO DE DURÁN (female) - Human rights worker**

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Amnesty International has learned with concern of the killing of Blanca Valero de Durán on 29 January 1992 in Barrancabermeja, Santander department, in circumstances suggesting she may have been extrajudicially executed.

Blanca Valero de Durán was the secretary of the Comité Regional de Derechos Humanos del Magdalena Medio (CREDHOS), Magdalena Medio Human Rights Regional Committee, which for several years has been denouncing human rights violations committed by the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary groups in the Magdalena Medio region and offering support to the victims and their relatives.

As Blanca Valero de Durán left the CREDHOS offices at about 6.30 pm on 29 January two armed men in civilian clothes fired several shots at her at point blank range. She reportedly died instantly. The two assailants escaped. Blanca de Durán was married with three children.

Several members of CREDHOS, including the President, lawyer Jorge Gómez Lizarazo, have received repeated death threats in the name of paramilitary organizations in recent months. In March 1991 another member of CREDHOS, Humberto Hernández, was killed in similar circumstances. Those responsible have not been brought to justice.

The work of CREDHOS in defence of human rights in the strife-torn region of Magdalena Medio has achieved international recognition. In 1991 CREDHOS received the 'Lettelier-Moffit' award from the Institute of Political Studies in Washington, United States. In recent weeks CREDHOS had publicly expressed serious concern about the escalation of abuses, including enforced recruitment, torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" committed by paramilitary and regular armed forces against members of the civilian population in the region of San Vicente and Carmen de Chucuri, Santander department. CREDHOS have also denounced abuses committed by guerrilla organizations in the region.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The largely rural area of the Magdalena Medio in central Colombia has been a focus of political violence for several years following the emergence of guerrilla groups in the 1960s and subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. Despite the progress that has been made through peace talks between several of the guerrilla groups and the government, there has been a continuation of political violence. In areas where guerrilla forces are active, the local population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and paramilitary forces. Principal victims have included members of legal left-wing political parties, community and civic leaders, trade unionists. Human rights groups attempting to support victims and denounce abuses have frequently been accused by high-ranking army commanders of links with subversive groups and have themselves increasingly come under

attack.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing serious concern at the killing of Blanca Valero de Durán in circumstances suggesting she may have been extrajudicially executed;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into her death, the results of which should be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging the Colombian authorities to take immediate steps to identify those responsible for repeated threats against other members of CREDHOS;
- requesting the Colombian government take measures to guarantee that human rights workers are able to carry out their lawful activities without fear of reprisal.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President of the Republic:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo  
Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente /  
Dear President Gaviria**

**Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066, + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937**

2) Minister of Defence:

Dr. Rafael Pardo Rueda  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Ministro /  
Dear Minister**

**Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes: +57 1 222 1874**

3) Minister of Justice:

Fernando Carillo  
Ministerio de Justicia  
Ministerio de Justicia  
Carrera 15, No 9-63  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Ministro /  
Dear Minister**

**Telegrams: Ministro Justicia, Bogota Colombia**

**Faxes: + 57 1 288 49 06**

4) Procurator General:

Dr. Carlos Gustavo Arrieta Padilla  
Procurador General de la Nación  
Procuraduría General  
Edificio Banco Ganadero  
Carrera 5, No. 15-80  
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

**Sr. Procurador General de la Nación /  
Dear Dr. Arrieta**

**Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472**

5) Commander of the Fifth Brigade:

General Harold Bedoya Pizarro  
Comandante de la V Brigada  
Calle 14, Carrera 33  
Bucaramanga  
Santander, Colombia

**Sr General /  
Dear General**

**Telegrams: General Pizarro, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia**

6) Commander of the Nueva Granada Battalion:

Comandante Batallón de Anti-aereo Nueva Granada  
Barrancabermeja  
Santander, Colombia

**Sr Comandante /  
Dear Commander**

**Telegrams: Comandante Batallon de Anti-aereo Nueva Granada, Santander, Colombia**

**COPIES TO:**

CREDHOS  
AA 505  
Barrancabermeja  
Santander  
Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 March 1992.