

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 22/93 Fear of "disappearance"/torture

29 January 1993

COLOMBIA: Ramón VILLEGAS

Gustavo CORONEL

Luís Alfonso ASCANIO

Wilson QUINTERO

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Ramón Villegas, Gustavo Coronel, Luís Alfonso Ascanio and Wilson Quintero, who have not been seen since they were detained by members of the Colombian armed forces on 12 January 1993 in the community of San José del Tarra, Hacarí, Norte de Santander department. Their detention has been denied.

According to formal complaints presented by relatives to the Provincial Procurator office in Ocaña, Procuraduría Provincial de Ocaña, these men were detained together with several other people by members of the army's Mobile Brigade No. 2, Brigada Móvil No. 2, who have been carrying out counter-guerrilla operations in the area. Most of those detained were released after several hours. Those released stated that whilst in detention they were subjected to torture and ill-treatment and threatened with death if they refused to collaborate with the soldiers by informing them of the whereabouts of guerrillas in the area.

Concern for the safety of the four men increased following a press report that the Mobile Brigade No. 2 had stated that four guerrillas had been killed in Hacarí. Military authorities frequently claim that victims of extrajudicial executions by members of the armed forces were "guerrillas killed in combat".

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 the subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. Peace talks between the remaining active guerrilla groups and the government broke down earlier this year and there has been a resultant increase in guerrilla activity and in the armed forces counter-guerrilla operations. The government declared a national state of emergency in November 1992. 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.

On assuming command of Mobile Brigade No. 2 in December 1992, Brigadier General Agustín Ardila Uribe declared that:-

"Another aspect of conduct which has brought into question the image of the institution is the treatment of detainees. Experience has amply demonstrated that good treatment during interviews leads to better results than treatment which causes personal or moral injury."

"otro comportamiento que ha contribuido a cuestionar la imagen de la institución ha sido el manejo de los detenidos. La experiencia ha demostrado ampliamente que el buen trato en las entrevistas o declaraciones conduce a mejores resultados, que el empleo de sistemas que lesionan la integridad personal o moral de los capturados."

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Ramón Villegas, Gustavo Coronel, Luís Alfonso Ascanio and Wilson Quintero, who have not been seen since they were

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detained by the army's Mobile Brigade No. 2 on 12 January 1993 and whose detention has subsequently been denied;

- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into their whereabouts;
- urging that if they are in detention, that they be humanely treated and allowed full access to family, doctors and lawyers. (You may quote the Brigade Commander's declaration on the treatment of detainees which is given above);
- urging that if they are in detention, that they be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought before a competent court or released.

APPEALS TO:

1) 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

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 284 0472

Salutation: Sr. Procurador de la Nación / Dear Dr. Arrieta

2) Minister of Defence:

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

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Pardo Rueda, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

3) Commander of 2nd Mobile Brigade:

Brigadier General Agustín Ardila Uribe
Comandante Brigada Móvil No. 2
Ministerio de Defensa
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Brigada Móvil No 2, Ministerio Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Estimado Comandante / Dear Sir

4) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324, + 57 1 287 7937

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Gaviria

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human Rights Organization:

Señores

CSPP

AA 22803

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 12 March 1993.