

PUBLIC

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Fear for

COLOMBIA Fear for safety:

An unknown number of people who have been abducted and who are now "disappeared"

**Peasant farmer leaders and the civilian population of the municipality of Yondó,
department
t of
Antioquia**

Amnesty International is concerned that communities in the municipality of Yondó, department of Antioquia, are at risk of imminent attack by paramilitary forces.

This follows a reported raid by some 70 paramilitaries on the village of San Juan de Ité on 7 February 2000 where those responsible reportedly threatened to massacre the populations of three other villages: La Congoja, Campo Bijao and Puerto Nuevo Ité. As a result some 80 families - around 400 people - have now fled the villages. During the raid two peasant farmers, Gabriel Castañeda and José Ignacio Suárez, were killed and the son of José Ignacio Suárez abducted.

The paramilitaries reportedly wore armbands identifying themselves as belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia.

There have also been recent rumours of an imminent paramilitary attack against the town of Yondó, the capital of Yondó municipality, and reports that a "black list", "*Lista negra*", is now circulating in the area. Such lists often contain the names of people the security forces and their paramilitary allies label as guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators. Those who appear on such lists are often attacked. These fears have been fuelled by reports that unidentified gunmen have been seen in communities around the town.

No apparent effort has been made by the security forces to apprehend paramilitaries still in the area or to provide any protection to the civilian population.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. The Colombian government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989, yet they continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

Guerrilla forces have also committed serious violations of international humanitarian law including executing those they accuse of being security force or paramilitary force collaborators.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of communities living in the municipality of Yondó after paramilitary threats to attack the villages of La Congoja, Campo

Bijao and Puerto Nuevo Ité and rumours that an attack on the town of Yondó is imminent;

- calling for full and impartial investigations into the paramilitary raid, on 7 February 2000, on the village of San Juan de Ité during which two peasant farmers were killed and an unknown number of people were abducted and are still "disappearance", for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that all measures necessary are taken to establish the whereabouts and guarantee the safety of all those abducted, including the son of José Ignacio Suárez, from San Juan de Ité during the paramilitary raid;
- urging that all measures are taken to guarantee the safety of the civilian population in the municipality of Yondó;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Yondó, department of Antioquia and neighbouring areas, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO (if you have trouble getting a fax tone please try later):

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 2186 / 337 1351

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No. 8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5584 / 342 3201 / 341 9739

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Regional 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 March 2000.