

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible "disappearance" / Fear for Safety

28 February 1995

COLOMBIA

Armando Rafael PAYARES DE AGUAS, aged 42

Armando Rafael Payares de Aguas was abducted from his home in the town of Copey, Cesar department, on 17 February 1995 by armed men. He has not been seen since and there is serious concern for his safety. Armando Payares is a member of the left-wing coalition political party Patriotic Union, *Unión Patriótica*, UP.

Armando Payares was with friends and family when, at 12.30pm, a group of six heavily-armed men forced their way into his home. He was handcuffed and his feet tied and then forced into a waiting vehicle. As the vehicle left, two other vehicles reportedly joined it and they were seen leaving in the direction of Barranquilla, Atlántico department.

The town of Copey is heavily militarized as a result of guerrilla activity in the area. In such a militarized zone, stringent checks would be made on all vehicles entering and leaving. The vehicles involved in the abduction of Armando Payares, however, had been seen in the town since early the same day, without any reported checks being made and were able to leave Copey without hindrance.

The UP states that, since its formation in 1985, more than 2,500 of its members have been killed. Although political parties and independent organizations are free to operate in Colombia, members of all political parties have been victims of human rights violations including illegal detention, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution because of their political views and activism.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. Particular targets have been members of left-wing parties, community and trade union leaders. The majority of such abuses have been attributed by the Colombian forces to civilian "death squads" which it claims it is unable to control. Amnesty International is not always in a position to establish responsibility for each "disappearance" as perpetrators are often not fully identified. However, independent investigations have concluded that many such groups operate under the command or with the support of the Colombian armed and security forces. There is also evidence to suggest that members of the national police are members of these "death squads".

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Armando Payares, who has not been seen since 17 February 1995 when he was abducted from his home in Copey, Cesar department, by six heavily armed men;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough investigation into his whereabouts;
- urging that if he is in detention, that he be humanely treated and allowed access to relatives and to a lawyer;
- urging that if he is in detention, that he be immediately charged with a recognizable criminal offence or released.

APPEALS TO1) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

2) Procurator General:

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Vasquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723/281 7531

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

3) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
 Fiscal General de la Nación
 Fiscalía General de la Nación
 Apartado Aéreo 29855
 Santafé de Bogotá
 Colombia

Telegrams:Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 245 5292

Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

4) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdoba Triviño
 Defensor del Pueblo
 Defensoría del Pueblo
 Calle 35 No. 7-25 piso 5
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams:Defensor del Pueblo Trivino, Defensoria del Pueblo,
 Bogota, Colombia**

Faxes:+ 57 1 346 1225/285 6908

Salutation: Estimado Dr Triviño/Dear Dr. Triviño

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared"

Señores
 ASFADDES
 AA 011446
 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 20 April 1995.