

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/013/2002

28 January 2002

Further information on UA 04/02 (AMR 23/002/2002, 4 January 2002) and follow-up (AMR 23/006/2002, 16 January 2002) - Fear for Safety/Possible Disappearance

COLOMBIA The civilian population of the Catatumbo region, including Luis Alberto Cano (m), aged 18

New names: Daniel Pallares (m)

Eliceo Canonigo Contreras (m), aged 20

José Noe Ballena (m), aged 18

Two other young men

11 inhabitants of 77 hamlet, El Tarra municipality

Killed: Johonny Gutiérrez (m), José Noe Gutiérrez (m), David Quintero (m) and his sons Hugo, Daniel and Dairo Quintero

Army-backed paramilitary groups have reportedly abducted 16 people and killed at least six others in the Catatumbo region. The army have taken no decisive action, and the civilian population remain in grave danger.

Daniel Pallares was reportedly abducted on 16 January by a paramilitary group based in the rural area near the town of Convención, while driving a truck towards the hamlet of Trinidad y Guasiles in the Convención municipality.

On 20 January another paramilitary group reportedly abducted Eliceo Canonigo Contreras, Jose Noe Ballena and two other young men in the Campana hamlet, El Tarra municipality. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

That day paramilitaries abducted a further 11 people from another hamlet in El Tarra, called "77", who are still in their hands. They were able to do this unhindered although there is an army base only 8km away in Filo del Gringo.

Johonny Gutiérrez and José Noe Gutiérrez were reportedly killed by paramilitary groups operating in Teorama on 12 January. On 20 January David Quintero and his sons Hugo, Daniel and Dairo were reportedly killed in the Trinidad hamlet, Convención municipality.

Civilians forced to flee their homes in the municipalities of Teorama, Convención and El Tarra are still arriving in Ocaña and Convención town centres. According to a number of witnesses in the region, an army lieutenant based in the Convención municipality has been seen together with paramilitaries.

Amnesty International is concerned that although the army have a heavy presence in the region, and have been alerted repeatedly to paramilitary incursions, they have taken no decisive action to prevent paramilitaries from attacking civilians and consolidating their position in the area.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in El Tarra, Teorama and Convención, Norte de Santander Department, and the rest of the Catatumbo region, and asking what the government and armed forces will do to protect them;

- expressing concern for the safety of Daniel Pallares, Eliceo Canonigo Contreras, Jose Noe Ballena and two other young men reportedly abducted by paramilitary groups;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the reported killing of Johonny Gutierrez, Jose Noe Gutierrez, David, Hugo, Daniel and Dairo Quintero and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of the 11 people reportedly abducted by paramilitaries and used as human shields in El Tarra municipality on 20 January, calling for a full and impartial investigation and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing concern that the government and armed forces have failed to protect the civilian population of the department of Norte de Santander and the Catatumbo region and to combat paramilitary groups in the area, despite repeated warnings of impending paramilitary attacks;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Norte de Santander, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:Commander of the V Brigade

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval

Comandante de la V Brigada

Calle 14, Carrera 33, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Telegram: Comandante de la V Brigada, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia**Fax: + 57 76 455051 / 351493 / 359189 / 334390****Salutation: Dear Commander Carreño Sandoval / Sr. General Carreño Sandoval**Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogotá, Colombia**Fax: + 57 1 570 2000****Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio**National Advocate for the People

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz

Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia**Fax: + 57 1 640 0491****Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz**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**Telex: 44281 PALP CO****Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71**

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

MINGA

AA 40303,

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 11 March 2002.