

**COLOMBIA**Alejandro Hernández (m), aged 17

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Alejandro Hernández, a trainee worker with the Catholic Church in San Miguel la Dorada Municipality, Putumayo Department, has "disappeared" after reportedly being detained by army-backed paramilitaries. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

Alejandro was attending a meeting with other church leaders on 26 January when he was reportedly captured by a paramilitary group operating in the area. The paramilitary commander of the group, reportedly accused Alejandro of being a guerrilla collaborator and informant when he told a community leader who had enquired about the boy's whereabouts: "*Alejandro Hernández es un auxiliador de la guerrilla...para nosotros es más peligroso un informante que un guerrillero,*" "Alejandro Hernández is a guerrilla collaborator...for us an informer is more dangerous than a guerrilla".

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The paramilitary group operating in the area have reportedly taken over the homes of those displaced from the area due to fighting between paramilitary and armed opposition groups. On 25 January, the day before Alejandro "disappeared", the army reportedly set up a base nearby. On 17 January community leader and church worker, Eugenio Mejía was reportedly killed by paramilitaries in the neighbouring municipality of Valle del Guamez, Putumayo Department. Church workers, Human rights defenders, Trade unionists and other activists have frequently been labelled subversives by the security forces and their paramilitary allies and suffered threats and harassment for carrying out their legitimate work. In the past they have suffered death threats, killings and disappearances at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Others have been forced to relocate to another region or even leave the country in fear for their lives. Guerilla forces have also threatened or killed those they consider to be army or paramilitary collaborators.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Alejandro Hernández, who has not been seen since 26 January, and urging the authorities to do everything necessary to find out where he is;
- urging the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into his "disappearance", to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Putumayo, and for members of the security forces responsible for cooperating and operating in unison with these groups to be brought to justice;
- calling for decisive action to combat and dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated UN recommendations and government commitments.

**APPEALS TO:**

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**

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**

Commander of the XXIV Brigade of the Army

XXIV BRIGADA

Comandante de la XXIV Brigada

Coronel Gabriel Ramón Díaz

Santa Ana, Putumayo, COLOMBIA

**Telegram: Comandante de la XXIV Brigada, Putumayo, Colombia**

**Salutation: Dear Colonel Ramón Díaz / Estimado Coronel Ramón Díaz**

**COPIES TO:**

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**

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 15 March 2002.