

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Execution / Fear for safety

29 March 1993

COLOMBIA: Gerardo MORENO FLOREZ, indigenous leader

Amnesty International is concerned at the killing of Gerardo Moreno Flórez, on 19 March 1993 in circumstances suggesting he was the victim of extrajudicial execution and fears for the safety of other members of the indian community he represented.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Gerardo Moreno Flórez was killed during the evening of 19 March at his home in the indian reserve (*resguardo indígena*) of San Andrés de Sotavento, department of Córdoba, by an unknown gunman who fired five shots. The killing took place during an electrical blackout and the gunman managed to escape. Gerardo Moreno died on the way to the hospital at Chinú.

Gerardo Moreno was a leader of the Zenú indian community in the indian reserve of San Andrés de Sotavento and a leading member of the National Indigenous Organization ONIC, (*Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia*). As indigenous leader in San Andrés de Sotavento, Gerardo Moreno had been representing indians who were involved in a land dispute. In January 1993 about 15 members of the indian community were reportedly briefly detained over the land dispute and in February their land and property was burned, reportedly by a local landowner.

Amnesty International does not take sides in conflicting claims in disputes over land rights, however, it is concerned at human rights violations occurring within that context. The organization is concerned for the safety of members of the indigenous community of San Andrés de Sotavento who continue their fight for land rights.

Gerardo Moreno was detained in April 1992 by members of the Colombian army's UNASE, accused of illegally carrying a revolver. Charges were dropped and he was released on 4 December. On 28 September 1991 Gerardo Moreno survived an earlier attempt on his life in San Andrés de Sotavento. Gerardo Moreno, married with three children, was also a social science teacher in Sincelejo, in neighbouring Sucre department.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human Rights violations against members of Colombia's indigenous communities often occur in the context of land conflicts. Indigenous people lawfully defending what they maintain are their land rights have on numerous occasions been arbitrarily arrested and ill-treated by members of the security forces.

Entire communities have been violently evicted from land they had been occupying and community leaders imprisoned on charges of "land invasion". In some cases, measures to force indigenous communities from land have resulted in killings that appear to have been deliberate and politically motivated.

San Andrés de Sotavento leaders maintain that land cultivated by the Zenú indians constitute part of Córdoba department's indian reserves; they say that the Zenú indians hold long-standing title to these lands and that the title was confirmed by the government's land reform agency, INCORA, Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of Gerardo Moreno Florez in circumstances suggesting he was the victim of extrajudicial execution;
- requesting an independent investigation in order to identify and bring all those responsible to justice, the results of which should be made public;
- requesting that all necessary guarantees be provided to members of the indian communities in San Andrés de Sotavento lawfully contesting land rights;
- requesting assurances from the Colombian Government that it is committed to the protection of its indigenous peoples particularly in view of 1993 being the United Nations' declared International Year for the World's Indigenous Populations.

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 Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO;

41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

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

2) President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 3066; +57 1 286 7324; +57 1 287 7937

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Gaviria

3) Advocate for the People:

Dr. Jaime Córdova Triviño

Defensor del Pueblo

Defensoría del Pueblo

Calle 34, Carrera 5

Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Defensor del Pueblo, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 284 0472

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Triviño / Dear Dr. Triviño

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Señores

ONIC

Carrera 4, No. 15-48

Santa Fé 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 10 May 1993.