

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Torture/"Disappearance"

28 May 1991

COLOMBIA

Luz Amparo OCHOA, aged 22

Amnesty International is concerned about the reported "disappearance" of Luz Amparo Ochoa, aged 22, a mother of two young children, who was last seen on 8 May 1991 in Santander department.

According to reports, during the night of 7 May 1991 a soldier physically attacked Luz Amparo Ochoa in her home and threatened to kill her if she denounced the attack. The following morning Luz Amparo Ochoa went to the army's Nueva Granada Battalion in Barrancabermeja with the intention of denouncing the attack. According to witnesses, later that afternoon as Luz Amparo Ochoa was on her way to visit relatives, she was seen being forced, screaming and shouting, into a taxi some 500 metres from a military control post at a place called Puente Sogamoso, on the road between Barrancabermeja and Bucaramanga, in the department of Santander, in central Colombia's Magdalena Medio region.

A few days later a writ of habeas corpus was presented before a judge in Barrancabermeja who went to the Nueva Granada Battalion in Barrancabermeja to search for Luz Amparo Ochoa, but the military deny holding her and taking part in the attack.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The largely rural area of Magdalena Medio has been the focus of political violence for several years following the emergence of guerrilla groups in the 1960s and subsequent militarization of the region during the 1980s. Despite some progress having been made in peace talks between several guerrilla groups and the government, there has been a continuation of political violence. In areas where guerrilla forces are active the local civilian population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential guerrilla collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and paramilitary forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the possible "disappearance" of Luz Amparo Ochoa and requesting an urgent investigation into her whereabouts;
- urging that if in detention she be immediately brought before a competent court or released;
- urging that while in detention she be treated humanely, and provided full access to lawyers and relatives;
- expressing concern at the reported attack on Luz Amparo Ochoa by a soldier and requesting an independent investigation.

APPEALS TO

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

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324

+ 57 1 287 7937

+ 57 1 283 3066

General Oscar Botero Restrepo
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Coronel Héctor Manuel Bernal Caicedo
Comandante del Batallón "Nueva Granada"
Calle 12
Pueblo Nuevo
Barrancabermeja, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Nueva Granada Batallon, Pueblo Nuevo, Barrancabermeja, Colombia

COPIES TO:

Dr. Gustavo Arrieta
Procurador General de la Nación
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Bogotá, Colombia

Señores
CREDDHOS
AA 788
Barrancabermeja
Colombia (human rights group)

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 July 1991.