

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/030/2001

15 March 2001

Further information on UA 39/01 (AMR 23/018/2001, 14 February 2001) and follow-up (AMR 23/026/2001) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA Civilian populations of El Tarra and Tibú, department of Norte de Santander

New names: Giovanni Angarita  
Mauricio Montes  
Teresa Beltrán  
Gearly Salcedo  
Martha Arias

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Army-backed paramilitaries have again attacked communities in El Tarra and Tibú municipalities, killing at least ten people and abducting five others, who have since "disappeared".

Early in the morning of 10 March, a large group of paramilitaries entered the hamlet of Mineiro in Tibú, reportedly killing two peasants and throwing their bodies into the River Catatumbo. They then reportedly abducted over 100 civilians and drove off with them. All were later released. Reports suggest that on 15 March approximately 300 paramilitaries were camped in the region.

On 12 March army-backed paramilitaries reportedly took several women and children hostage from the hamlet of La Unión Catatumbo, in El Tarra. Other people from the hamlet, including Giovanni Angarita, Mauricio Montes, Teresa Beltrán, Gearly Salcedo and Martha Arias have "disappeared", and there are reports that another ten peasant farmers have been killed, and their bodies are lying in the village. The heavy paramilitary presence around the community has made it impossible for relatives to retrieve the bodies.

Amnesty International has also received reports that approximately 200 people have been forced to flee their homes, many of whom have reportedly fled to the municipal town of El Tarra.

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have repeatedly denounced the continuing paramilitary violence in El Tarra and Tibú. These attacks take place despite a heavy military presence in the region, highlighting the authorities' continued failure to combat paramilitarism and protect civilians in the region, despite repeated United Nations (UN) recommendations to take action and government promises to do so.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian populations of El Tarra and Tibú, in Norte de Santander Department, who have again been attacked by paramilitaries;
- asking what the government and armed forces are going to do to protect these people;
- expressing concern for the safety of Giovanni Angarita, Mauricio Montes, Teresa Beltrán, Gearly Salcedo and Martha Arias, who have reportedly "disappeared", and urging the authorities to take immediate action to find out where they are, do everything possible to protect them and order a full and impartial investigation and bring those responsible to justice;

- expressing concern that the government and armed forces have done nothing 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:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351**

**Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente**

Minister of Foreign Relations

Dr. Guillermo Fernández de Soto

Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Palacio San Carlos

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telex: 45209 MRRE CO**

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**Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro**

Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces

Comandante General de las Fuerzas Militares

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin

Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52

Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

**Fax: +57 1 222 2096 / 221 3653**

**Salutation: Dear Commander/Sr. Comandante**

Commander of V Brigade

Comandante de la V Brigada

General Martín Orlando Carreño Sandoval

Calle 14, Carrera 33

Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

**Faxes: +57 76 359 189 / 334 390**

**Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Commandante**

**COPIES TO:**

Alternative Legal Association

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 25 April 2001.