

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/32/96

UA 137/96 Fear for safety / Possible Extrajudicial Executions 6 June 1996

COLOMBIA
Manuel Beltrán
Alejandro Teherán
Dagoberto Santero
Julio Santero

Carlos Solano
Milecio de la Cruz
Saúl Baltazar
Guillermo Carmona
Rosember Clemente
and other Zenú Indian leaders

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of the Zenú Indian community in San Andrés de Sotavento, Córdoba department, following death threats against its leadership. In the past three weeks, five of the community's leaders have been killed.

On 16 May 1996 Manuel Beltrán, leader of the *resguardo indígena*, indigenous reservation, of San Andrés de Sotavento was killed in his house by four armed men.

On 25 May two unidentified gunmen killed Alejandro Teherán, *Secretario del Cabildo Mayor*, Secretary of Governing Council of San Andrés de Sotavento in the hamlet of Tuchín, San Andrés de Sotavento municipality.

On 3 June a written death threat was found in the indigenous office in San Andrés de Sotavento. The threat warned the indigenous community's authorities, the *Junta Directiva*, that if they do not leave the municipality within one week they would be killed. The message said: "*Alerta se van a morir. Ya cayó el primero sigue Saúl Baltazar tienes una semana para irte o te mueres. Preparate: Guillermo Carmona, Rosember Clemente y los demás de la junta central*", "Watch out you are going to die. The first has already been killed, Saúl Baltazar will be next. You have got a week to get out or you will die. Get ready: Guillermo Carmona, Rosember Clemente and the rest of the central council".

On 5 June, Zenú indigenous leaders Dagoberto Santero, Julio Santero, Carlos Solano and Milecio de la Cruz were taken from their homes to a public place in the municipality of Palmito-Sucre in the indigenous reservation of San Andrés de Sotavento where the first three were shot dead. Milecio de la Cruz was injured.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several Zenú Indians have been killed in recent years in the context of land disputes (see UA 89/93, AMR 23/19/93, 29 March 1993 and UA 125/94, AMR 23/31/94, 30 March 1994). Whilst Amnesty International does not take position in disputes over the land, it is seriously concerned about human rights violations occurring within such a context.

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and arbitrary arrest. President Ernesto Samper Pizano has publicly stated that tackling the human rights situation will be a priority for his government. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces, together with their paramilitary allies, continue to commit serious abuses with virtual

impunity. Only exceptionally are perpetrators brought to justice; the vast majority of members of the armed and security forces responsible for gross human rights violations remain in active service.

Members of indigenous communities have frequently been subjected to human rights violations by the security forces who accuse them of collaborating with Colombia's guerrilla organizations.

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

- expressing deep concern at the recent killings by unidentified gunmen, of five Zenú Indian leaders in San Andrés de Sotavento, Córdoba department (naming some or all) and expressing concern for the safety of other Zenú Indian leaders who have received death threats;
- urging that there be an immediate and thorough inquiry into the threats and killings, the results of which should be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging that all appropriate measures are taken to ensure that members of the Zenú Indian community and of other indigenous organizations are able to pursue their legitimate activities without fear for their physical integrity.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434 / 284 7176 / 284 7186

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper

2) Procurator General

Dr. Orlando Vásquez Velásquez
 Procurador General de la Nación
 Procuraduría General
 Edificio Banco Ganadero
 Carrera 5, No. 15-80
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Procurador General Vásquez, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes:+ 57 1 342 9723

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

3) Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior Serpa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 286 04 85 / 288 7177 / 284 0214

Salutation:Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

4) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento
Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación
Apartado Aéreo 29855
Santafé de Bogotá
Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalia General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 57 1 245 5292 / 288 2828

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso

COPIES TO:

Lawyers' Association:

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados
AA 44456
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 5 August 1996.