

5 June 1998

Further information on UA 156/98 (AMR 23/34/98, 19 May 1998) - "Disappearance"
/ Fear for Safety / Extrajudicial Executions

COLOMBIA Killed after being abducted: 25 inhabitants of Barrancabermeja: Orlando MARTÍNEZ; Juan de Jesús VALDIVIESO, Riqui NELSON GARCÍA; Jaime Yesid PEÑA; José Milton CAÑAS; José Octavio OSORIO; Wilfrido PÉREZ SERNA; Wilson PACHECO; Diego Fernando OCHOA, María Alejandra OCHOA; Giovanni HERRERA; Carlos A. PRADA; Ender GONZÁLEZ BAENA; Libardo LONDOÑO;; José REINEL CAMPO; A. Fernando ARDILA LANDÍNEZ; Daniel Campos PÉREZ; Gary de Jesús PINEDO; Oscar Leonel BARRERA; Melquisedec SALAMANCA; Carlos E. ESCOBAR; Wilfredo PÉREZ SERNA; Edgar PINEDA RANGEL; Juan Carlos RODRÍGUEZ and Luis Hernando SUÁREZ. (Please note there are some discrepancies regarding some names but the above have been obtained most recently).

New names: "Disappeared": ; Oswaldo Enrique VÁSQUEZ QUIÑONES and Robert WEUS GORDILLO SOLANO

Killed during paramilitary attack: Diominio HERNÁNDEZ, Germán León QUINTERO; Neill GUZMÁN; Pedro Julio RONDÓN; José J. JARAMILLO; Luis Jesús ARGUELLO and Eliécer QUINTERO.

Fear for Safety: Popular activists, including human rights workers from CREDHOS, trade union leaders and other inhabitants of Barrancabermeja and nearby communities.

Twenty-five inhabitants of the town of Barrancabermeja, department of Santander, forcibly abducted by members of a paramilitary group on 16 May 1998, have been extrajudicially executed. In the light of the failure by the authorities to act to dismantle the paramilitary group responsible for the attack on the town and the continued threats to the community by the group, fears for other inhabitants of Barrancabermeja are heightened.

An announcement was made on 4 June by José Noé Ríos, the Commissioner for Peace, confirming that he had received a communiqué from the paramilitary group claiming responsibility. In it the group, calling itself *Autodefensas de Santander*, Santander Self-Defence Groups, claimed that those executed had been found guilty at a "juicio", "trial" of being members of the armed opposition groups: *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN), National Liberation Army and the *Ejército Popular de Liberación*, (EPL), Popular Liberation Army. Relatives of the victims deny this.

The paramilitary group deny abducting Oswaldo Enrique Vásquez Quiñones and Roberto Weus Gordillo Solano (see names above) who are still disappeared. There is serious concern they may have been amongst those killed during the attack on the town on 16 May.

In an interview on national television on 28 May, one of the leaders of the paramilitary group stated that their "military targets" included leaders of the Unión Sindical de Obreros, USO, national oil worker's union and the inhabitants of Barrancabermeja in general.

USO and other groups organized a five-day civic strike immediately after the paramilitary attack to demand the release of those abducted. With the announcement of the extrajudicial executions a 24 hour strike in the town of Barrancabermeja is now planned.

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

- urging that full and impartial investigations be undertaken into the killings of both those people abducted and those killed during the paramilitary attack on 16 May 1998 and for Oswaldo Enrique Vásquez Quiñones and Roberto Weus Gordillo Solano whose whereabouts remain unknown, that the results be made public and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing deep concern for the safety of the inhabitants of Barrancabermeja and the municipalities of Yondó, Cantagallo, San Pablo and Simití and for other activists including USO leaders and urging that all appropriate measures be taken to protect them;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area and urging that those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
- urging that the authorities take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 286 7434
Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Samper

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Alfonso López Caballero, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA
Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes:45406 MINGO CO
Faxes:+ 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405
Salutation:Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejía, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO / 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874
Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

CREDHOS

AA 505, Barrancabermeja, Santander, 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 17 July 1998.