

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/71/98

UA 246/98 Fear for Safety/Possible Extrajudicial Execution

17 September 1998

COLOMBIA Killed: José OSORIO MONTOYA

Fear for safety: relatives of José Osorio Montoya and other displaced community members in Turbo and Bocas del Atrato

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the forcibly displaced communities in Turbo and Bocas del Atrato, in the Urabá region of the department of Antioquia, after José Osorio Montoya, a local leader, was recently killed.

The murder of José Osorio took place on 10 September 1998 and was reportedly carried out by two members of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá*, (ACCU), Peasant Self-Defence Groups of Córdoba and Urabá.

According to information available, the men responsible for José Osorio's death pursued him on a motorbike as he travelled from the farm where he had been working in the municipality of Unguía, department of Chocó, to Unguía.

He was reportedly attacked and tortured by the men before being shot 17 times.

The attack took place approximately one kilometre from a military checkpoint, through which José Osorio had just passed, and another military station situated a similar distance in the opposite direction. Army personnel from both military locations reportedly failed to intervene during the attack, allowing the gunmen to pass through the checkpoint on their return. Paramilitary groups often operate with the support and acquiescence of the Colombian armed forces.

Despite the heavy presence of the armed forces in the area, the body was left abandoned on the road-side until relatives of José Osorio came to claim it on 14 September.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

José Osorio was one of 3,800 people forcibly displaced from their homes in the Cuenca de Carica region, department of Chocó, following a large-scale joint paramilitary and armed forces offensive in the region in February 1997. The displaced are often considered to be guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators by the armed forces and their paramilitary allies, and as a result are often the victims of death threats and serious human rights violations.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. The Colombian Government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband such groups in 1989, yet they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country. No effective steps have, as yet, been taken by the authorities to control their actions and to hold members accountable for serious and widespread human rights violations. The Attorney General recently stated that more than 200 outstanding arrest warrants issued against alleged paramilitary members responsible for widespread human rights violations have still not been acted upon by the security forces. Colombia's new President, Andrés Pastrana, who took office on 8 August 1998 has so far failed to take any effective steps to tackle the country's long running human rights crisis.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of José Osorio Montoya on 10 September 1998, reportedly by two members of the paramilitary organization ACCU;
- expressing concern for the safety of his family and the forcibly displaced people of Bocas del Atrato and Turbo;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the killing of José Osorio Montoya, that the results be made public, and that those responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by the displaced communities in Bocas del Atrato and Turbo, are taken to guarantee their safety;
- 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;
- reminding Colombia's new government of the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

APPEALS TO:President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andres Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186 / 289 3377 / 286 7434

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Fiscal General, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2017

Salutation: Estimado Dr. Méndez / Dear Dr. Méndez

Minister of Defence

Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda
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:Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz, AA 31861, 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 29 October 1998.

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."
Article 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>