

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 458/91 Fear of "Disappearance"

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23 December 1991

COLOMBIA Robinson LUSITANTE MENDUA (aged 17)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of 17-year-old Robinson Lusitante Mendua, a member of the Kofan Indigenous community, who was last seen on 14 December 1991 when he was reportedly detained by members of the Colombian army in the municipality of Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo department.

According to reports, the commander of the local military base initially denied the detention of Robinson Lusitante Mendua. After members of the Kofan community persisted with their inquiries into his whereabouts, the commander later said he had spoken to the army personnel responsible for the detention, who claimed to have released Robinson Lusitante Mendua. However, he has not returned to his community and his whereabouts remain unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President César Gaviria Trujillo has repeatedly pledged his government to protect human rights. In his inaugural address in August 1990, he said that "the public opinion's trust and credibility in the armed forces depend on the armed forces' acting according to the constitution. The armed forces must respect human rights because the country's defence also means upholding the law". However, despite the government's commitment to uphold respect for human rights, members of the Colombian armed forces and paramilitary groups associated with them have continued to commit serious abuses, including torture, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance" with virtual impunity.

In September 1991 the Procurator General's office produced an official report stating that more than 3,000 complaints had been lodged against the army and police in the last two years for human rights violations.

On receiving the report President Gaviria stated:

"No puede el Gobierno desconocer la gravedad de las acusaciones que se hacen en forma reiterada y masiva contra sus agentes, ni ignorar hasta que punto reina la impunidad por violación de derechos humanos."

"The government cannot fail to recognise the seriousness of the accusations made constantly and on a massive scale against its agents, nor ignore the extent of impunity in cases of human rights violations."

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

- expressing concern at the possible "disappearance" of Robinson Lusitante Mendua following his detention by the Colombian army and requesting an immediate and effective investigation to establish his whereabouts;

- urging that he be brought before a competent court or released

- urging that whilst in detention he be humanely treated and provided with full access to lawyers and relatives.

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APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic:

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

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

**Faxes: + 57 1 283 3066, + 57 1 286 7324 or
+ 57 1 287 7937**

[Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President]

2) Minister of Defence:

Dr Rafael Pardo Rueda
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

[Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister]

3) Procurator General

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

Telegrams: Procurador General Arrieta, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

Faxes: +57 1 284 0472

[Sr Procurador General de la Nación/Dear Procurator General]

4) Minister of the Interior

Dr Humberto de la Calle Lombana
Ministro de Gobierno
Ministerio de Gobierno
Carrera 8, No. 8-09. Piso 2
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

[Sr Ministro/Dear Minister]

5) Minister of Justice

Dr Fernando Carrillo

Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Calle 26, No. 27-48
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, Bogota, Colombia
Faxes: +57 1 288 4906
[Sr Ministro/Dear Minister]

COPIES TO:

Comisión Andina de Juristas Human Rights Group
AA 58533
Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia

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 3 February 1992.