

UA 274/99

Fear for**COLOMBIA Civilian population, Municipalities of Buga and Tuluá, Valle del Cauca Department**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of the civilian population of Tuluá and Buga municipalities, in Valle del Cauca department. Between 24 and 28 September 1999, men believed to be paramilitaries killed at least 10 civilians with machetes and chainsaws in the hamlets of San Rafael de Tuluá and La Mina.

Families fleeing the violence have taken shelter in towns throughout the region. In the town of Buga, where a sports centre is providing emergency shelter, the number of displaced families is fast outgrowing the resources available; food is already in short supply. At night, men on motorbikes fire shots into the air and shout threats at the displaced civilians, whom they accuse of being guerrilla sympathisers.

In July 1999, the paramilitary organisation the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, announced that it was launching an offensive in Valle del Cauca. Pamphlets distributed throughout the department stated "*los amigos de los guerrilleros son nuestros enemigos y nuestros enemigos son objetivo militar*", (friends of the guerrillas are our enemies and our enemies are a military target).

There are grave fears for the safety of civilians in the communities of Alaska, La Habana and La Magdalena, where it is believed that the AUC is planning further attacks.

At least 35 civilians have been killed, and more than 2000 internally displaced, by the paramilitary offensive in the region of Tuluá since the beginning of August.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peasant communities in disputed zones in Colombia's long-running civil conflict have frequently suffered human rights violations. Neither the armed forces and their paramilitary allies nor the left-wing armed opposition groups recognize the civilian population's neutrality in the conflict.

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 constitutional 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 work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in Tuluá and Buga, Valle del Cauca department.
- urging that the authorities take all steps deemed necessary by those at risk to guarantee their safety;

- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killings of civilians in Tuluá and Buga, that the results be made public and those responsible 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 Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Néstor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministerio del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 45406 MINGO CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 8025 / 281 5884 / 342 3201

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Governor of Valle del Cauca Department

Juan Fernando Bonilla, Gobernador del Departamento de Valle del Cauca
Gobernación de Valle del Cauca
Carrera 6ª, Calles 9ª y 10ª, Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Fax: + 57 2 885 8813

Salutation: Sr. Gobernador/ Dear Governor

Commander of the Armed Forces

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin, Comandante de las Fuerzas Militares
Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante Fuerzas Militares, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 222 2096 (If answered say "fax, por favor")

Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander

COPIES TO:Human Rights and Educational Organisation

CINEP, AA 25916, 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 November 1999.