

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/79/99

EXTRA 158/99 Possible "Disappearance" / Fear for safety

11 November 1999

COLOMBIA **Diana Salamanca Martínez, worker with the non-governmental human rights organization Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace**

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**Other staff at the organization**

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Diana Salamanca Martínez after receiving news of her possible "disappearance" on 10 November 1999.

Diana Salamanca Martínez works with the human rights organization, the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*, Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace in the municipality of Dabeiba, department of Antioquia. She has been working closely with members of the forcibly displaced community of La Balsita, who have sought refuge in the municipality.

Justice and Peace workers in Antioquia are frequently labelled as guerrillas and guerrilla collaborators by the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies for their work with forcibly displaced peoples, making them targets for serious human rights violations. There is a strong presence of paramilitary forces in the municipality of Dabeiba. Her possible abduction took place a short distance from the *Batallón Coyara*, Coyara Battalion's military base.

Diana Salamanca reportedly "disappeared" close to an area known as Alto Bonito on the road leading to Mutatá town where she had gone in a Dabeiba municipal truck to collect wood with a group from the displaced community.

According to reports she left the group and went to sit by the roadside. When the others went to find her they reported seeing an armed man in civilian clothes getting into a lorry already occupied by a number of men in plainclothes and driving away.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace are working with a number of forcibly displaced communities in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó. Many of these communities were forcibly displaced by joint army and paramilitary force operations in recent years, though guerrilla forces have also been responsible for forcibly displacing communities in the region.

Both those who have been displaced and the human rights organizations who work closely with them are considered to be guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators by the armed forces and their paramilitary allies and have often been victim to 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 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 human rights worker Diana Salamanca Martínez, who is believed to have been abducted by paramilitary forces on 10 November 1999 in the municipality of Dabeiba;
- expressing concern for the safety of others also working with the *Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz*;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by the those at risk to guarantee their safety;
- calling for an immediate and comprehensive investigation into the "disappearance" of Diana Salamanca Martínez in order to establish her whereabouts and to bring to justice those responsible;
- urging that the results of the investigation be made public;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and UN recommendations.

**APPEALS TO (please note that fax numbers are sometimes turned off and can be difficult to reach):**

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**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 337 1351 / 286 7434 / 284 2186**

**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 Interior, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 342 3201 / 286 8025 / 281 5884**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister**

Commander of XVII Brigade of Colombian Army

Coronel Gutiérrez  
Comandante, XVII Brigada del Ejército Nacional  
Carepa, Urabá, Colombia

**Faxes: + 57 4 823 6601**

**Salutation: Sr. Comandante / Dear Commander**

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Ministro 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 23 December 1999.