

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 397/94 Extrajudicial Executions / Torture /
 Fear for safety

10 November 1994

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| COLOMBIA | Lucas SEPÚLVEDA, community activist |) | |
| | José CAYETANO SEPÚLVEDA |) | killed |
| | Luis Antonio VILLEGAS |) | |

Ana Ilba DONADO (f), mother of Luis Antonio Villegas
Pedro CALDERA

and other inhabitants of La Carolina, municipality of San Alberto, Cesar
department

On 20 October 1994, three members of the community of La Carolina were killed, and another tortured, by men believed to be members of the Colombian army or paramilitary forces working with them. The men were allegedly looking for people named on a list they were carrying, fuelling fears for the safety of other inhabitants of La Carolina as paramilitary activity in the area continues.

At 8.30pm on 20 October, a group of about 15 armed men, some wearing uniforms of the kind used by soldiers from the Mobile Brigades, *Brigadas Móviles*, entered the village of La Carolina. Witnesses claim that the men were travelling in a vehicle seen going into the military Operational Headquarters No.27, *Comando Operativo No.27*, in San Alberto.

The men went to Ana Ilba Donado's home and asked for her, but only her youngest son, Luis Antonio Villegas, was there. Having ransacked the house, they forcibly abducted him, before breaking into José Cayetano Sepúlveda's house and taking him away with his hands bound. Reports state that the two men were then tortured and killed. The armed men then forced their way into the house of Lucas Sepúlveda, the President of the Communal Action Council, *Junta de Acción Comunal*, and attempted to force him outside. When he resisted, they killed him in front of his family.

The men are reported to have tortured another man, Pedro Caldera, warning him not to denounce the killings or he would share the same fate. There are now fears for his safety, as well as that of Ana Ilba Donado, who, it seems, is being targeted by the military. Sources state that in June her house was illegally broken into by members of the military Operational Headquarters No.27.

Indeed, all civilians in the region will continue to be in danger as long as the impunity currently enjoyed by the army and their paramilitary allies is allowed to continue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years widespread and systematic human rights violations have occurred in Colombia. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office on 7 August 1994, made several promises, both during his election and subsequently, to improve the human rights situation. However, members of the Colombian armed and security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Civilians, including community leaders, political activists and trade unionists have frequently been the victims of such violations.

Many paramilitary forces have been set up and trained by the armed forces, and continue to play a central role in the Colombian army's counter-insurgency strategy, a strategy characterized by the systematic violation of human rights.

President Samper's promises include a commitment to eradicate paramilitary activity and stamp out the impunity which benefits members of the security and paramilitary forces responsible for human rights violations.

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

- expressing concern at the killing of Lucas Sepúlveda, José Cayetano Sepúlveda and Luis Antonio Villegas on the 20 October 1994 in circumstances suggesting extrajudicial execution, and at the torture of Pedro Caldera;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into these reports, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of Ana Ilba Donado, Pedro Caldera and other members of the community of La Carolina, municipality of San Alberto, Cesar department, in view of continuing paramilitary activity in the area;
- urging that the government of President Ernesto Samper take immediate steps to dismantle paramilitary forces in Cesar department and elsewhere, in line with stated policy, and investigate possible links between such forces and the Colombian security forces;
- calling for members of paramilitary forces and military personnel working with them responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia:

Señor Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939

Salutation:Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper

Minister of Defence

Dr. Fernando Botero Zea
 Ministro de Defensa Nacional
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
 Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams:Ministro de Defensa Botero Zea, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes:42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes:+ 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe
 Ministro de Gobierno
 Ministerio de Gobierno
 Carrera 8a, No.8-09, Piso 7⁰
 Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro de Gobierno, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes:45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 281 5884

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organization

MINGA, Calle 19 No. 4-88
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 24 December 1994.