

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 420/94      Possible Extrajudicial Execution/"Disappearance" 30 November 1994

COLOMBIA                      **Hermés José Enrique MOLINA - killed**  
**Ofiel Santiago QUINTERO                      "**  
**Alfonso PAEZ VERGEL                      "**  
**Uriel BARBOSA BARBOSA                      "**  
**Alirio VELÁSQUEZ PAEZ                      "**  
**César Julio CRUZ QUIÑONEZ - "disappeared"**  
**Alfredo TARAZONA VILLEGAS -                      "**  
**Eledis José ROSADO TORRES -                      "**

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On 22 November 1994 the eight political prisoners named above were taken from the prison in Aguachica, Cesar department, by armed men believed to be members of a paramilitary organization. The bodies of five of those abducted have been found, while the whereabouts of the other three remain unknown. There is serious concern for their safety.

According to reports, at 2.10am on 22 November, a truck containing about 30 heavily armed men arrived at the Judicial Prison, *Cárcel Judicial*, in Aguachica. The gunmen, some dressed in military uniforms, disarmed the prison guards and took the cell keys. They initially shouted that they were members of the armed opposition group *Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)*, National Liberation Army, who had come to rescue the men, but when no one reacted they called out the names of eight prisoners from a list they were carrying. All eight were in prison on political charges such as "rebellion", "illegal possession of weapons" or "links with the guerrilla", "*rebelión*", "*porte ilegal de armas*", "*nexos con la guerrilla*".

Hermés José Enrique Molina refused to leave his cell and was shot dead there. The other seven named above were forcibly taken from the prison. The bodies of Alfonso Paez Vergel, Alirio Velásquez Pérez, Uriel Barbosa Barbosa and Ofiel Santiago Quintero were later found on land close to Aguachica, with gunshot wounds.

Aguachica judicial prison is five blocks from the town's military base and the Police Station for the Fifth District, *Quinto Distrito de la Policía Nacional*. Despite this, the armed men acted without any intervention from either of the security forces, who did not arrive on the scene until two hours later. Members of the community report that the army usually carried out regular vigilance of the prison, but did not do so that day.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Despite repeated government pledges to protect human rights, members of the Colombian and security forces together with their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious abuses with virtual impunity. Many paramilitary groups have their origins in the civilian "self-defence" squads which the army created in the 1980s to act as auxiliaries during counter-insurgency operations. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. Although in 1989 the Colombian government suspended the legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the Colombia armed forces to combat and disband such groups, paramilitary forces have continued to kill and "disappear" perceived opponents with impunity in many areas of the country and continue to work with the support of the security forces. President Ernesto Samper Pizano, who assumed office

on 7 August 1994, has made repeated promises, both during his election campaign and since taking office, to improve the human rights situation. His promises include a commitment to eradicate paramilitary forces. However, no action has yet been taken to dismantle these groups or to bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice.

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

- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the attack on Aguachica Judicial prison on 22 November 1994 by armed men, some wearing army uniforms, resulting in the killing of five political prisoners (naming some or all) and the "disappearance" of three others; and urging that the results of the investigation be made public;
- urging that all possible measures be taken to locate the three prisoners still missing, César Julio Cruz Quiñonez, Alfredo Tarazona Villegas and Eledis José Rosado;
- expressing concern that despite the attack on the prison taking place so close to both army and police bases, there was no intervention by either force and that no representative from either force arrived at the prison until two hours later;
- urging that the government should immediately fulfil its commitment to disband paramilitary forces presently operating as auxiliaries of the armed forces or with armed forces' complicity. Members of such forces responsible for human rights violations should be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO**

1) President of Colombia

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

**Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 44281 PALP CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 286 7434/287 7939**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Samper**

2) Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Valdivieso Sarmiento  
 Fiscal General de la Nación  
 Fiscalía General de la Nación  
 Apartado Aéreo 29855  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Fiscal General Valdivieso, Fiscalía General, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 57 1 287 0939 or 288 2828**

**Salutation: Estimado Valdivieso/Dear Dr. Valdivieso**

3) Minister of Defence

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

**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa Botero, Bogota, Colombia**

**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874/288 4906/228 1874**

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

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

1) Commander of the Army  
General Harold Bedoya Pizano  
Comandante del Ejército  
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá  
Colombia

**FAXes: + 57 1 222 2584**

2) Alternative Legal Association  
MINGA  
AA 40303  
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 5 January 1994.