

UA 315/01

Fear for

**COLOMBIAEfraín Vasquez (m)] inhabitants of Altos del Rosario,
Carmelo Urieta (m)] Bolívar department**

Efraín Vasquez and Carmelo Urieta were reportedly abducted by armed-backed paramilitary forces in Bolívar department on 3 December. Their whereabouts are unknown and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety.

The men from Altos del Rosario, Bolívar department were travelling by boat on the Rio Magdalena, Magdalena River to an area known as La Pacha, with a farmer by the name of Diofanor Zayas Sanabria. They were reportedly intercepted by another boat, containing six men in military uniform who are reportedly members of a paramilitary group operating in the area. Efraín Vasquez, Carmelo Urieta and Diofanor Zayas Sanabria were then ordered off their boat by the paramilitary commander.

Following their "disappearance", Efraín Vasquez, Carmelo Urieta and Diofanor Zayas Sanabria's family and friends went to paramilitaries based in Pueblito Mejía, in the municipality of Barranco de Loba, to ask about their whereabouts. They were reportedly told by paramilitaries to stop looking for the three men, as they were all dead. They were also told by eyewitnesses in the region, that Diofanor Zayas Sanabria had been tortured, killed and his body carved into pieces before being thrown into the river. Efraín Vasquez and Carmelo Urieta's fate is presently unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity.

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 - by action or omission - in many areas of the country. Civilians living in conflict zones including the south of Bolívar Department, have frequently been labelled guerrilla collaborators by the security forces and their paramilitary allies and these accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations. Guerrilla forces are also responsible for the deliberate and arbitrary killing of those they consider to be collaborating with their enemies.

Prior to his reported death, Diofanor Zayas Sanabria had been the victim of a number of attacks. In 1996 his house was burnt during a military operation; in 1997 part of his herd of cattle was stolen by members of a paramilitary group and in 1998 he and his family were forced to flee the region when they learned that his name was on a paramilitary death list. He had only returned to Altos del Rosario a few months ago.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety Efraín Vasquez and Carmelo Urieta and urging the authorities to take effective measures to discover their whereabouts;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the reported killing of Diofanor Zayas Sanabria;
- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee the safety of the civilian population in southern areas of Bolivar department;

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in southern areas of the department of Bolivar, urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

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 1 566 20 71

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell,
Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional,
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Oficina 217,
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Defence Minister, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 222 00 59

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,
Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,
Apartado Aéreo 29855, Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Fiscal General, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000

Salutation: Dear Dr Osorio / Estimado Dr Osorio

COPIES TO:

Corporación Cleber
Cll. 19 N°34 -37 Of.306
De. PROCOIL T- B
Santafé de Bogotá

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 22 January 2002.