

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 23/017/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 145
27 May 2005

Colombia: Targeting of civilians by armed groups is a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law

If it is confirmed that guerrilla forces of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, were responsible for the killing of five councillors and the secretary of the town council, this would represent yet another demonstration of blatant disregard for international humanitarian law by this armed group.

According to press reports, on 24 May 2005, FARC guerrillas entered the municipality of Puerto Rico in the south-eastern Colombian department of Caquetá and shot dead José Ausencio Olarte, Willard Villegas, Gerardo Collazos, Silvio Mesa and John Ferney González, town councillors in the department of Caquetá. Germán Rodríguez, a town council secretary was also killed. Survivors say the FARC were responsible.

Full and impartial investigations are essential to establish responsibility in these killings and bring those responsible to justice.

In recent years FARC guerrillas have repeatedly threatened to kill councillors and other state representatives in the department of Caquetá and other parts of Colombia. They have been responsible for death threats and numerous killings of state representatives.

These killings again reiterate the urgency of guerrilla forces and the government reaching a humanitarian agreement to guarantee the protection of civilians in the conflict.