

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/012/2002

28 January 2002

Further information on UA 102/01 (AMR 23/045/2001, 19 April 2001) and follow-ups (AMR 23/075/2001, 8 August 2001; AMR 23/119/2001, 26 November 2001) - Fear for safety/possible "disappearance"

COLOMBIA Civilian inhabitants of rural communities of the Alto and Bajo Naya regions, Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments

New name : José Dimas Cuero (m), community leader

Community leader José Dimas Cuero, from the Guayabal hamlet in Buenaventura municipality, was reportedly abducted by army-backed paramilitaries on 14 January, and has not been seen since.

He was in a boat with his son on the Cajambre river estuary at the time, on his way to Buenaventura municipality. The paramilitaries reportedly took José Dimas, but let his son go.

The abduction of José Dimas heightens concern for the civilian population of Buenaventura municipality and other neighbouring regions of the Alto and Bajo Naya, given the presence of paramilitaries in the area who have repeatedly threatened to attack them.

There has been a heavy military presence in Alto and Bajo Naya regions over the last year, but paramilitaries still operate freely. On 3 April 2001 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights asked the Colombian government to take action to protect civilians in the region, after reports that paramilitaries were planning an attack. Despite this, eight days later paramilitaries killed at least 32 peasant farmers in a raid on the municipalities of Buenos Aires and Timba, in Alto Naya.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of community José Dimas Cuero, who has not been seen since 14 January, when he was reportedly abducted by a paramilitary group backed by the army, and urging the authorities to take action to find him;
- expressing concern for the safety of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities living along the River Naya in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments;
- expressing concern about the increasing presence of army-backed paramilitaries in the region, and urging the authorities to take action to protect the civilian population;
- reminding the authorities that if they fail protect the civilian population, it will seem that the paramilitaries are operating with the complicity of the security forces;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments, 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 the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegram: Presidente, Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 336 2109 / 337 1351
Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell
Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia
Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO
Fax: + 57 1 286 4126 / 281 1213 / 222 1874
Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of the III Brigade of the Army (in charge of Alto Naya region)
Comandante III Brigada del Ejército Nacional
General Francisco René Pedraza
Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia
Telegrams: Comandante, III Brigada Ejército, Cali
Fax: +57 2 330 7161 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")
Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Comandante

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization
Comité Andino de Servicios
A.A.246111, 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 11 March 2002.