

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 221/01 (AMR 23/085/2001, 5 September 2001) and follow-ups (AMR 23/111/2001, 2 November 2001, AMR 23/027/2002, 25 February 2002 and AMR 23/103/2002, 10 September 2002) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Miguel Cifuentes (m), leader of the *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (ACVC), Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, Magdalena Medio region, department of Santander
Pablo Javier Arenales (m)] human rights activists
José Guillermo Larios (m)]
Diana Marcela Gallego (f) and her family
Diana García (f)
Other members of the non-governmental human rights organization
REINICIAR
Francisco Campo (m), human rights activist
Other members of the non-governmental organization *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS), Regional Human Rights Corporation in Barrancabermeja, department of Santander

New name: Andrés Gil (m), member of the ACVC

Miguel Cifuentes and Andrés Gil, members of the *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (ACVC), Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, are among many human rights activists in Santander department who have reportedly received death threats from army-backed paramilitaries in recent weeks. While there is no new information about the other individuals named above, Amnesty International has renewed concerns for the safety of all human rights defenders in the area.

During a meeting of army-backed paramilitaries in the town of Yondó, Antioquia department, one of the paramilitary leaders reportedly said: "We are not going to tolerate more guerrilla members of the Peasant Association that use the excuse of human rights work to promote the guerrilla, especially Andrés Gil, who is a guerrilla and Miguel Cifuentes who is an agronomist supporter of the guerrilla". (*"No vamos a tolerar más a los guerrilleros de la tal Asociación de Campesinos, que con la excusa del trabajo de Derechos Humanos le hacen proselitismo a la Guerrilla, principalmente a ese tal Andrés Gil que es un ideólogo de ellos y Miguel Cifuentes que es un agrónomo vendido a la Guerrilla"*).

At a separate meeting of army-backed paramilitaries in the city of Barrancabermeja, Santander department, another paramilitary allegedly said: "Barrancabermeja is not free from guerrilla members yet; they are still infiltrated in trade unions and non-governmental organizations [NGOs]. To guarantee that the guerrilla does not retake Barrancabermeja they should be annihilated" (*"Barrancabermeja aun no está libre de guerrilleros, todavía quedan infiltrados en los sindicatos, ONGs y para garantizar qye la Guerrilla no se retome Barrancabermeja hay que aniquilarlos"*).

These reports of threats follow orders allegedly given by the *Bloque Central Bolívar*, Central Bolívar Bloc of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia to paramilitary commanders in Yondó and Barrancabermeja to kill non-governmental organization workers and people who have been involved in grass-roots social organizations.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of members of the Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley, workers and human rights activists, trade unionists and popular activists in the department of Santander following reports of paramilitary threats against them;
- urging that all measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, are taken to guarantee their safety;
- urging that full and impartial investigations into these threats are undertaken, that the results are made public and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into links between the security forces and paramilitary forces in Barrancabermeja and surrounding areas, that the results are made public and that those members of the security forces responsible for operating in unison with paramilitary forces or supporting them are brought to justice;
- expressing concern at the continued large-scale presence of AUC forces in Barrancabermeja despite the heavy military presence in the city and urging immediate decisive action to confront and dismantle these groups in line with repeated UN recommendations and governmental commitments

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 342 0592

Salutation: Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe/Dear President Uribe

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos,

Ministro del Interior y de Justicia

Ministerio del Interior

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 566 4573

Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

Governor of Santander Department

Sr. Jorge Eliecer Gómez Villamizar,

Gobernador del Departamento de Santander, Gobernación de Santander,

Calle 37, No. 10-30,

Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Telegram: Gobernador Santander, Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia

Fax: + 57 76 842843

Salutation: Dear Governor Gómez Villamizar / Sr. Gobernador Gómez Villamizar

COPIES TO:

'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective

Corporación Colectivo de Abogados 'José Alvear Restrepo',

AA 33035

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 31 March 2003.