

PUBLIC

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07 September 2005

UA 230/05 Fear for safety/ "disappearance"

COLOMBIA **Olver Montoya Cáceres (m) ]**  
**Evert Bonet Quintero (m) ] peasant farmers**  
**Cirro Navarro (m) ]**  
**Residents of El Carmen municipality, Norte de Santander Department**

**Killed:** **Dover Jaimes (m)**  
**Eduardo García (m)**  
**Omar (surname unknown) (m)**

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Olver Montoya Cáceres, Evert Bonet Quintero and Cirro Navarro, peasant farmers from the hamlets of Playas Ricas and El Paraíso, in the municipality of El Carmen in Norte de Santander department, have reportedly been abducted by army-backed paramilitaries. They were abducted during raids on the area in which at least three others were killed. The lives of the three are in grave danger. Other inhabitants of the municipality may be at risk of attack and "disappearance" at the hands of paramilitaries operating in the area.

In the early hours of 30 August, a large number of paramilitaries reportedly ransacked homes in the hamlets of Playas Ricas and El Paraíso, part of the Catatumbo area of northeastern Colombia. In El Paraíso the paramilitaries reportedly killed an inhabitant named Dover Jaimes and abducted Cirro Navarro, whose whereabouts remain unknown. In the adjacent hamlet of El Descanso the paramilitaries allegedly killed peasant farmer Eduardo García. During the incursion into Playas Ricas the paramilitaries reportedly forced a man called Omar out of his home, shot him in the legs and stoned him to death. Reports received by Amnesty International indicate that following his killing the paramilitaries sexually abused his wife.

In the same hamlet the paramilitaries reportedly abducted 11 children and 13 adults to act as human shields. The group was forced to walk for several hours until they arrived in the neighbouring hamlet of Los Corazones in the municipality of Curumaní, Cesar Department. Once there, the paramilitaries released everyone except Olver Montoya Cáceres and Evert Bonet Quintero. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

These killings and "disappearances" have occurred in an area where large numbers of Colombian military forces are operating. In addition, it follows the supposed demobilization of paramilitary units operating in the region, which took place between December 2004 and January 2005, as part of ongoing government dialogue with paramilitary forces. Despite the supposed demobilization, Amnesty International has received information of continued human rights violations committed by paramilitaries operating in the area. On 25 December 2004, a paramilitary incursion reportedly left eight peasant farmers dead in the hamlet of Santa Inés, in El Carmen municipality. Amnesty International has received a number of reports of subsequent human rights violations committed by paramilitaries in the region.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Catatumbo area, which borders Venezuela, is an area of economic and military strategic importance. In an attempt to establish control of the Catatumbo, army-backed paramilitaries launched a series of incursions in the area in 1999 and subsequently consolidated their presence in the region with serious human rights violations against the civilian population. Guerrilla forces for their part have responded to the paramilitary presence in the region with numerous killings of civilians they accuse of collaborating with their enemies, including massacres of peasant farmers working on coca plantations in areas of paramilitary control over the last year.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Olver Montoya Cáceres, Evert Bonet Quintero and Cirro Navarro who were reportedly abducted by paramilitaries on 30 August;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into their "disappearance", with those responsible brought to justice, and calling on the authorities to take all necessary action to find out where the abductees are;
- expressing concern for the safety of the civilian population in the municipality of El Carmen in Norte de Santander department, after the paramilitary incursions of 30 August;
- calling on the authorities to reveal what steps they are taking to protect the civilian population in the area;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups in the department of Norte de Santander, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 337 5890**

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

High Commissioner for Peace

Alto Comisionado Para la Paz

Dr. Luis Carlos Restrepo

Casa de Nariño - Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 560 9946**

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

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)**

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

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental human rights organization

MINGA

Calle 19 # 5-88, oficina 1203

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 19 October 2005.