

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/62/98

17 August 1998

Further information on UA 168/98 (AMR 23/36/98, 2 June 1998) - Fear for safety and new concern: Possible "Disappearance"

COLOMBIA Residents of San José de Apartadó

and new name: Luis HERNÁN RUIZ, aged 60

There are grave fears for the safety of Luis Hernán Ruiz, a member of the "Peace Community" of San José de Apartadó, municipality of Apartadó, department of Angioquia, after his forcible abduction and possible "disappearance" by paramilitary forces on 14 August 1998. This raises concern for the safety of the whole community.

According to information received Luis Hernán was forced out of his car by three heavily armed men at an illegal paramilitary checkpoint situated outside the community on the road leading to Apartadó. The driver was ordered to leave.

Luis Hernán was returning from the funeral of his son who was reportedly killed by paramilitary members on 12 August, also in Apartadó. The checkpoint has reportedly been in position for two weeks despite the strong presence of the armed forces in the area.

Over a year ago a high ranking officer of the XVII Brigade, which operates in the region, denounced the failure of the Brigade Commander to confront paramilitary groups operating in the area. The Office of the Attorney General is currently reported to be conducting criminal investigations into possible links between the XVII Brigade and paramilitary forces.

In March 1997, San José de Apartadó declared itself to be a *Comunidad de Paz*, Peace Community, in an attempt to persuade warring factions to respect their neutrality and right to life. Since the declaration, however, over 30 inhabitants have been killed and two "disappeared", the majority by army-backed paramilitary groups, others by members of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a guerrilla group.

The community is made up of around 1,000 people, forcibly displaced from their homes in the Urabá region in 1996 and 1997 in the wake of massacres committed by army-backed paramilitaries and guerrilla groups.

Although inhabitants have demanded that the government secure conditions for their safe return to the lands they have abandoned they continue to face human rights violations by the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in SPANISH or in your own language:

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the possible "disappearance" of Luis Hernán Ruiz after he was abducted on 14 August 1998 at an illegal checkpoint, and expressing concern for his safety;
- expressing concern for the safety of all those still resident in the community of San José de Apartadó and for the safety of those returning to their lands;
- welcoming reports of criminal investigations by the Office of the Attorney General into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the region, urging that these should be advanced and that members of the security forces responsible for supporting such groups be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated governmental commitments;

- reminding Colombia's new government of the country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

APPEALS TO: (please note that fax tones may only be available during office hours local time)

President of Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andres Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 44281 PALP CO

Faxes: + 57 1 284 2186/289 3377/286 7434/

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Dr. Rodrigo Lloreda, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

Dr. Nestor Humberto Martínez, Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior, Carrera 8, No.8-09, Piso 2
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Ministro del Interior, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 45406 MINGO CO

Faxes: + 57 1 281 5884 / 286 6524 / 286 0405

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez, Fiscal General de la Nación
Fiscalia General de la Nación, Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855 Santafé
de Bogotá, Colombia

Faxes: + 571 570 2000 (when ansaphone picks up dial 2017 for fax)

Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr.

COPIES TO:

Association for Relatives of the "Disappeared"

Señores

ASFADDES

AA 011446

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 28 September 1998.