

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Possible Extrajudicial Execution

20 December 1990

COLOMBIA

Luis Napoleon TORRES

Angel María TORRES

Hugues CHAPARRO, indigenous leaders

Amnesty International has learned with concern of the torture and killing of three leaders of the Arhuacos Indians from the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Magdalena department. Luis Napoleon Torres, former governor and spiritual leader of the Arhuaco Indians and mediator between the community and the Colombian authorities, was killed together with community leaders Angel María Torres and Hugues Chaparro in circumstances suggesting they may have been victims of extrajudicial execution.

On 28 November 1990 the three set out from Valledupar, the capital of César department, on a bus going to Bogotá. According to eye-witness reports, the bus was stopped near a town called Curumani in the south of César by a group of heavily armed men wearing army uniforms, who forced the three men off the bus. On 13 December 1990 the bodies of Hugues Chaparro and Luis Napoleon Torres were found in an unmarked grave in Tomalinda, César, showing signs of severe torture. The body of Angel María Torres was found on 14 December in El Paso, César, also showing signs of torture.

Members of the Arhuaco community and the Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC), the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, have denounced the killings to both the regional procurator and the Procurator General, who has a human rights monitoring role in Colombia, and to other national authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years human rights violations have occurred on an increasing scale in Colombia. Armed forces counter-insurgency operations have been progressively intensified to combat the country's guerrilla groups. In areas where guerrilla forces are active, the local civilian population is often perceived by the armed forces as potential collaborators and has, as a result, been subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution by army personnel and civilians working for them. Civic and community leaders, including leaders of Indigenous communities in areas where guerrilla forces are active, have been particular targets. The majority of abuses have been attributed by Colombian authorities to civilian "death squads" which it claims it is unable to control. However, independent investigations, including judicial enquiries, have concluded that many such groups operate under the command or with the support of the Colombian armed forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the torture and killing of Luis Napoleon Torres, Angel María Torres and Hugues Chaparro in circumstances suggesting they may have been victims of extrajudicial execution;

- urging that there be an immediate enquiry into their deaths, the results of which should be made public;

- urging that all possible measures be taken to protect the lives of indigenous community leaders to ensure that they are able to carry out their lawful activities.

APPEALS TO

Presidente César Gaviria Trujillo
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Bogotá
COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Presidente Gaviria, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 44281 PALP CO
Faxes: + 57 1 286 7324

Dr. Gustavo Arrieta
Procurador General de la Nación
Edificio Banco Ganadero
Carrera 5, No. 15-80
Bogotá
COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Procurador General Gómez, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 41224 PRGEN CO or 41213 PGNDP CO

General Oscar Botero Restrepo
Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52
Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia
Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO or 44561 CFAC CO
Faxes: +57 1 222 1874

COPIES TO:

Comité Permanente por la Defensa
de los Derechos Humanos
AA 12817
Bogotá
Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 January 1991.