

20 July 2001

**Further information on 176/01 (AMR 23/070/2001, 18 July 2001) - "Disappearances"
/ Fear for Safety**

COLOMBIA Reinaldo PARRA [m]
 Yeimi CHITIVA [f]
 Milton BECERRA [m]
 Civilian population of the municipalities of El Líbano and
 Mariquita, Tolima department

Killed: Isabel GUZMAN [f], Luciano PARRA [m], Luz Mila RODRIGUEZ
 [f], Orlando ORTIZ [m], Hernando PARRA [m], Otoniel MURILLO
 [m], Ariel Maria PARRA [m]

New name: The family of Milton BECERRA

Amnesty International has learnt that Milton Bercerra managed to escape from the army-backed paramilitary group that had abducted him. He reportedly sustained gunshot wounds to his shoulder and hand. He apparently witnessed the killing of his seven travelling companions. Both he and his family are now in grave danger.

Milton Bercerra was abducted along with Isabel Guzman, Luciano Parra, Luz Mila Rodriguez, Orlando Ortiz, Hernando Parra, Otoniel Murillo and Ariel Maria Parra on 16 July. All of them were community leaders and relatives of peasant farmers Reinaldo Parra and Yeimi Chitiva, who "disappeared" on 10 July after reportedly being abducted by army-backed paramilitaries near the town of Mariquita in northern Tolima. The paramilitaries allegedly responsible for their "disappearance" had promised to let them go, if their families would meet with them.

In the past, those who have witnessed human rights abuses have often received death threats, "disappeared" or been killed at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

Amnesty International remains concerned for the safety of the civilian population in northern areas of Tolima department. On 15 July, paramilitaries apparently entered the communities of Pantanilla, Villanueva and El Bledo in the municipality of El Libano, near Mariquita, threatening and beating members of the communities.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Milton Becerra and his family and urging the authorities to guarantee their immediate safety;
- urging the authorities to establish the whereabouts of Reinaldo Parra and Yeimi Chitiva, and to secure their release unharmed, and to carry out a full and impartial investigation into their "disappearance";
- urging the authorities to do everything necessary to guarantee the safety of the civilian population in northern areas of Tolima department;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the abduction of Milton Bercerra and the reported killing of the seven people named above, as well as the reported paramilitary threats against and beatings of members of the civilian population of El Líbano;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in northern areas of the department of Tolima, 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 Colombia:

Señor Presidente Andrés 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 1 336 2109 / 565 8566

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente / Dear President Pastrana

Minister of Defence

Gustavo Bell Lemus, Ministro de Defensa Nacional
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Faxes: + 57 1 221 9088

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Minister

Gobernador del Departamento de Tolima

Sr. Guillermo Alfonso Jaramillo Martínez
Gobernación de Tolima
Calle 10 y 11, Carrera 3
Ibagué, Tolima, COLOMBIA

Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

Fax: + 57 82 638588

COPIES TO:Non-governmental human rights organization

Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos (CSPP)
Apartado Aéreo 22803
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 31 August 2001.