

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/119/2001

26 November 2001

Further information on UA 102/01 (AMR 23/045/2001, 19 April 2001) and follow-up (AMR 23/075/2001, 8 August 2001) - Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Civilian inhabitants of rural communities of the Alto and Bajo Naya regions, Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments

Amnesty International is seriously concerned at reports that army-backed paramilitary troops have increased their presence in the northern area of Cauca and southern area of Valle del Cauca over the last few days. There are particular concerns for the safety of the 25,000 inhabitants in the Alto and Bajo Naya region in the municipalities of Timba, Suárez, Buenos Aires and Buenaventura. Since the massacre of over 32 civilians in this area in April 2001, there have been repeated rumours and threats of a further massacre.

Civilian inhabitants of the municipalities of Timba, Suárez and Buenos Aires have reported that there now are about 300 paramilitaries in the area. This raises fears of a paramilitary incursion in these municipalities, especially in the areas of Alto and Bajo Naya and on the shores of River Yurumanguí.

On 11 April 2001, over 32 peasants farmers were killed in the municipalities of Buenos Aires and Timba (Alto Naya) in a massacre reportedly carried out by paramilitary groups (see UA 102/01, AMR 23/075/2001, 19 April). The massacre took place even though the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had called on the Colombian authorities to take action to protect the civilian communities on 3 April, in reaction to reports of an imminent paramilitary attack and despite the heavy military presence in the region.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities living along the River Naya in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments
- expressing concern about the increasing army-backed paramilitary presence in the region and urging the authorities to take action to protect the civilian population;
- reminding the authorities that if they fail protect the civilian population, it will seem that the paramilitaries are operating with the complicity of the security forces;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Valle del Cauca and Cauca departments, 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 the Republic
Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
Presidente de la República

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

Telegram: Presidente, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071 / 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegram: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 4126 / 281 1213 / 222 1874

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

Commander of the III Brigade of the Colombian Army (in charge of Alto Naya region)

Comandante III Brigada del Ejército Nacional

General Francisco René Pedraza

Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante, III Brigada Ejército, Cali

Fax: +57 2 330 7161 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Commander / Sr. Comandante

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization Sembrar

Apartado Aéreo 18621, 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 7 January 2002.