

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 23/28/97

24 April 1997

Further information (1) on UA 99/97 (AMR 23/22/97, 11 April 1997) - Fear for safety / possible extrajudicial execution / "disappearance"

COLOMBIA Civilian population of southwest Urabá region, department of Antioquia

Ovidio Torres - "disappeared"

new names: Miguel RAMÍREZ GIRALDO - killed
Gilberto RAMÍREZ GIRALDO - killed
Jairo GRACIANO - killed
José Antonio GRACIANO - killed
Miguel (family name unknown) - killed

Jorge DOMICO
Albeiro USMA - injured

Amnesty International has received further reports of killings and attempted killings of members of the civilian population committed by paramilitary forces operating in collusion with the security forces, in the southwest of the department of Urabá. The continued killings are witness to the failure of the Colombian authorities to take effective action to dismantle paramilitary groups and to bring to justice members of the security forces who collaborate with them. Amnesty International is concerned that this failure is placing the civilian population under continued threat.

According to information received on 10 April 1997 at approximately 1pm, a paramilitary group abducted brothers Gilberto and Miguel Ramírez Giraldo, in the village of Altas Arenas, municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia. The members of the paramilitary group reportedly used the brothers' machetes to chop their fingers off, then tied them to stakes. They then cut open the mens' stomachs, stabbed them in different parts of their bodies with the machetes and then decapitated them.

On 13 April at approximately 5pm, a group of paramilitaries surrounded José Antonio Graciano and Jairo Graciano at the bus station in Apartadó. The previous week the two men had been forced to flee their homes in the hamlet of Las Nieves, San José de Apartadó, municipality of Apartadó. The two men were forced onto motorcycles and their tortured bodies were later found in the Vélez district of Apartadó. Paramilitary forces had previously issued death threats against people who had fled from the community of San José de Apartadó following previous paramilitary operations in the area: "*los desplazados de San José de Apartadó serían buscados y asesinados*", "those displaced from San José de Apartadó would be hunted down and killed". On 14 April, at about 5.30pm, another young man bearing the family name Graciano, also displaced from Las Nieves, was reportedly killed by three paramilitaries in Apartadó in front of his mother.

On 21 April, paramilitaries detained two youths, Albeiro Usma and another known only as Miguel, in the municipality of La Unión, department of Antioquia. Miguel was killed with machete blows while Albeiro Usma managed to escape after being wounded. On the same day a group of peasant farmers

who had fled their homes in neighbouring communities and had sought refuge in the town of San José de Apartadó was surrounded by paramilitaries as they were making their way to the hamlet of Arenas Altas to collect food. The paramilitary group kept them under guard all day and threatened them. The commander of a Colombian Army unit based in the town of San José de Apartadó was reportedly informed of the events but took no action to protect the farmers.

On the same day, Jorge Domico, leader of the Patadó indigenous reserve in the community of La Playa, municipality of Apartadó, was also detained by paramilitary group members. He was taken to a paramilitary checkpoint which has been operating for several months. It is situated a short distance from a Colombian Army base in the Policarpa district of Apartadó. On receiving news of the capture of their leader, members of the indigenous community made their way to the checkpoint *en masse* and managed to secure his release.

At the present the town of San José de Apartadó is heavily militarized. Members of the Colombian Army have reportedly threatened the civilian population, stating that when they leave, the paramilitaries - "*los que parten en pedacitos*" ("those who chop up their victims in pieces") - will follow.

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

- calling for immediate measures to guarantee the safety of civilians and southwest of Urabá region, department of Antioquia, in the light of killings, attempted killings, and death threats during recent army/paramilitary operations;
 - calling for full and impartial investigations into these human rights violations, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
 - calling for an immediate investigation into the whereabouts of Ovidio Torres, and for the results to be made public;
- if possible, also:**
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the area and urging that those members of the security forces responsible for supporting and participating in such groups be brought to justice;
 - urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated governmental commitments.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Ernesto Samper Pizano
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño
 carrera 8 No. 7-26
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: President Samper Pizano, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 284 2186/286 3782/289 3377/286 7434/287 7939

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Samper

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejía
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

Governor of Antioquia

Sr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez
Gobernador de Antioquia
Gobernación de Antioquia
Calle 42B, # 52-106
Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia
Faxes: +57 4 381 1342
Telegrams: Gobernador, Antioquia, Colombia
Salutation: Estimado Sr. Gobernador/Dear Governor

In appeals to the Governor, acknowledge that guerrilla forces in Colombia have violated international humanitarian law; underline that such abuses can in no way justify human rights violations by the Colombian security forces and their paramilitary allies.

COPIES TO:

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace
Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz
AA 31861
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 5 June 1997.