

UA 192/99

Fear for Safety/Extrajudicial Execution/
"Disappearance"

30 July 1999

COLOMBIA Fear for Safety: The civilian population of Simití, Bolívar department and Puerto Wilches, Santander department.
Killed: Adolfo Peñaloza Segovia, Rigoberto Muñoz Guzman.
"Disappeared": Giovanni Puello Brache, Juan de Dios Puello Brache, Luis Alberto Puello Brache, Walter Puello Brache and Cesar Puello Brache.

There is grave concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the municipalities of Simití, Bolívar department, and nearby Puerto Wilches, Santander department, as paramilitary attacks on the civilian population in the region have been stepped up.

At midnight on 22 July 1999 some 30 heavily armed and uniformed men who identified themselves as *Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá* (ACCU), Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Cordoba and Urabá, went into the village of Vijagual in Puerto Wilches. Using a list, they searched for 12 members of the community who work on boats on the Magdalena river. They shot and killed the *Presidente de la Junta de Acción Comunal* (President of the Village Council), father of three Adolfo Peñaloza Segovia, in his house, and took Rigoberto Muñoz Guzman, a father of five, to the village park and killed him in front of his wife. Before they left the paramilitaries rounded up the relatives of other people named on the list and threatened to return.

On 25 July a group of heavily armed men, who also said they were ACCU members, went into Cesar Puello Brache's house in Simití and abducted his sons Giovanni, Juan de Dios, Luis Alberto, Walter and Cesar. When the men's relatives went to the local police station to report what had happened, the police reportedly told them "*lo sentimos mucho no podemos hacer nada*" (we're sorry but we can't do anything). The whereabouts of Cesar Puello Brache's sons are unknown.

With paramilitary attacks in the region becoming more and more frequent, there is also serious concern for the inhabitants of the neighbouring municipalities of Santa Rosa and San Pablo (see UA 167/99 AMR 23/50/99, 15 July 1999).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Peasant communities in disputed zones in Colombia's long-running civil conflict have frequently suffered human rights violations. Neither the armed forces and their paramilitary allies nor the left-wing armed opposition groups recognize the civilian population's neutrality in the conflict.

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies continue to commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups throughout the country. The Colombian government suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations and issued directives to the armed forces to combat and disband

such groups in 1989, yet they continue to work with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

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

- expressing grave concern for the civilian population of the municipalities of Simití, Santa Rosa and San Pablo in Bolívar department and Puerto Wilches, Santander department, and urging the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killings of Adolfo Peñaloza Segovia and Rigoberto Muñoz Guzman, for the results to be made public and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- expressing deep concern for the safety of Giovanni Puello Brache, Juan de Dios Puello Brache, Luis Alberto Puello Brache, Walter Puello Brache and Cesar Puello Brache, who have not been seen since they were forcibly abducted by paramilitaries on 25 July, and calling on the authorities to establish their whereabouts;
- urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region, in line with stated government commitments.

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

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 286 7434 / 337 1351

Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/ Dear President Pastrana

Commander of the Army

General Jorge Enrique Mora Rangel
Comandante del Ejército Nacional
Avenida Eldorado - Carrera 52, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Comandante del Ejército, Bogota, Colombia

Telexes: 43401 COEJC

Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander

Fax: + 57 1 315 1570

Attorney General

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Salutation: Estimado Dr./Dear Dr.

**COPIES TO: Alternative Legal Association,
MINGA, AA 40303, 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 10 September 1999.