

PUBLIC

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UA 66/01 Fear for safety / Possible "Disappearance" 19 March 2001

COLOMBIA **Matías ZAMBRANO**  
**José JUSTO ZAMBRANO**  
**Civilian population of La Pedregosa and Santa Catalina,**  
**municipality of Cajibío**

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A large contingent of paramilitaries, who are marching on the municipal capital of Cajibío in the department of Cauca, have entered a local community and abducted two people. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety, and for the safety of the civilian population in the area.

On 16 March approximately 200 paramilitaries, who had reportedly entered the municipality of Cajibío on 13 March, came to the community of Santa Catalina. They abducted Matías Zambrano and José Justo Zambrano. The two men have not been seen since. The paramilitaries are now advancing towards the community of La Pedregosa, which is on the way to Cajibío.

Over the past week, Colombian non-governmental human rights organizations have repeatedly alerted the commander of a battalion with the III Brigade of the Colombian army, the *Batallón José Hilario*, which is stationed in the area, that gunmen were advancing towards Cajibío. However, the army has taken no action to prevent the paramilitaries from advancing, and they have been able to march unhindered through the area.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Members of the Colombian army and security forces and their paramilitary allies commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. In the last five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. By the 19 January 2001, the United Nations Human Rights Office in Colombia had been informed that 26 massacres had been committed in 11 departments, and that more than 170 people had been killed, most of them by paramilitary groups.

In 1989 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. However, they continue to operate 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 concern for the safety of José Justo Zambrano and Matías Zambrano, who have not been seen since they were abducted by paramilitaries;
- urging the authorities to take all appropriate measures to secure their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into their abduction, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of civilians in the municipality of Cajibío, including the inhabitants of La Pedregosa and Santa Catalina, following reports that paramilitaries are advancing on the municipal capital, Cajibío;
- urging the authorities to take appropriate measures to protect the civilian population, while reminding them that if they fail to do so, 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 Cauca Department, 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

**Faxes: + 571 336 2109 / 337 1351**

**Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente**

Attorney General

Dr. Alfonso Gómez Méndez,  
 Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,  
 Diagonal 22B 5201, Apartado Aéreo 29855, Santafé de Bogotá  
 COLOMBIA

**Telegrams: Fiscal General, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Faxes: + 571 570 2022 (If the call is answered, say "Fax, por favor" and wait for the signal.)**

**Salutation: Estimado Dr. / Dear Dr. Gómez Méndez**

Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces

Comandante General de las Fuerzas Militares  
 General Fernando Tapias Stahelin  
 Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52  
 Santafé de Bogotá,  
 COLOMBIA

**Fax: + 571 222 2096 / 221 3653**

**Salutation: Sr Comandante General / Dear Commander-in-Chief**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Ombudsman

Defensor del Pueblo  
 Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes  
 Defensoría del Pueblo  
 Calle 55, No. 10-32/46  
 Santafé de Bogotá  
 COLOMBIA

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 30 April 2001.