

SPECIAL REPORT FOR CINC HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COLOMBIA

1997 STATISTICS from Department of State Human Rights Report 1997:

- Human rights violations are rampant in war-torn areas of Colombia.
- Abuses include violations of the most basic rights (right to life):
 - extrajudicial killings
 - forced disappearances
 - kidnappings
 - torture
- **Extrajudicial killings of more than 3500 citizens in 1997 by state and nonstate agents.**
 - Percentage of gross violations by security forces down, while those by paramilitary groups up.
 - Security forces responsible for 7.5% (first nine months of 1997) vs. 54% in 1993.
 - Paramilitary groups responsible for 69%
 - Guerrillas for 23.5%.
- Guerrillas interfered with the electoral process in October 1997 by killing or kidnapping more than 200 candidates, forcing more than 2000 candidates to withdraw, and kidnapping OAS election observers.
- 257,000 people internally displaced in 1997 alone; 525,000 for 1995-1997

Major Trends in Human Rights Violations:

- **The security forces have improved their record significantly.** The armed forces teach human rights training and have a human rights officers assigned to each unit.

- Many claim that the military has sidelined itself from the fight against the guerrillas partly because of human rights concerns.
- **Killings by paramilitary (PM) forces have dramatically increased.**
 - International observers and many in Washington believe that the military and security forces, feeling that their hands are tied, are secretly aiding the paramilitary forces.
 - The government announced a campaign against paramilitary forces in Dec 1997 and in recent weeks have arrested numerous paramilitary leaders, including prominent PM leader Victor Carranza.
- **Guerrillas continue to commit atrocities, including summary executions and kidnappings.**

Major Human Rights Violations in 1997:

Note: Given the large number (3500) of extrajudicial killings in 1997, a detailed description of each incident would require volumes of paper and take months to prepare. Listed below are the incidents which received the most public attention:

Mapiripan (Meta Department) – July 15-20, 1997

- (U) Paramilitary groups entered historically guerrilla-dominated Meta Department and took over the town of Mapiripan. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) Executed seven townspeople suspected of guerrilla sympathies. Thousands fled the town, claiming that PM had executed as many as two dozen others and thrown their bodies in the Guaviare River. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) Paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño admitted responsibility for the attack publicly in a September interview with El Tiempo newspaper. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) Army and Attorney General's Office opened separate administrative investigations into the possible involvement of four Army officers, including the Commander of the 7th Brigade, Brigadier General Jaime Humberto Uscategui, and of five civilian officials, including the mayor of Mapiripan. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) The Prosecutor General's office opened a criminal investigation. (DoS HR Report 1997)

Miraflores (Guaviare) – October 18-20, 1997

- (U) Similar attack by paramilitary forces. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) Left at least 5 people dead. (DoS HR Report 1997)
- (U) Prosecutor General opened criminal investigation into the role of the security forces in investigating the attack. (DoS HR Report 1997)

El Aro Massacre (Antioquia Department) – October 1997

- (U) Carried out by paramilitary force. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) Killed 15 people. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) United Autodefensas of Colombia (AUC), a paramilitary organization, claimed responsibility. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)

Tocaima Massacre (Cundimarca Department) – November 21, 1997

- (U) Shocked the nation with its savagery: fourteen people, including two minors, were shot to death, and its proximity to Bogotá – 100 km away. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) Heavily armed men with hit lists in hand dragged residents out of their homes in La Horqueta and Zelandia, tied and gagged them, made them lie down in the street, and shot them. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) Witnesses describe fifteen attackers, some wearing masks, and say that they appeared to be from Cordoba Department, home of Carlos Castaño's paramilitary group. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) Based on description of the attack, it is assumed to have been committed by paramilitary forces. MOD and Police Chief Serrano share this assessment. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)

- (U) Tocaima area is known as a guerrilla transit area and source of financing. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) La Horqueta village has now been almost completely abandoned by remaining residents. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) First massacre so close to Bogotá. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)

Urrao Massacre (Antioquia Department) – November 23, 1997

- (U) Armed men entered the town, identified seven men for assassination, including a town councilor from the Communist Party and the president of a community action organization. After shooting victims, dumped the bodies in a river. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)
- (U) Both guerrillas and paramilitaries have been active in the region, but paramilitaries are believed responsible for the massacre. (DTG 242224Z NOV 97 AMEMBASSY Bogotá Unclas)

Murders and Disappearances in Cesar Department – December 1-3, 1997

- (U) Eight peasants killed and four disappeared in three villages of Cesar Department. (DTG 040005Z DEC 97 DIA Washington DC Unclas)
- News reports claim that 25 armed men from Carlos Castaño's ACCU (Peasant Self-Defense Group of Cordoba and Uraba) were

responsible. (DTG 040005Z DEC 97 DIA Washington DC Unclas)

- GOC announced an investigation. (DTG 040005Z DEC 97 DIA Washington DC Unclas)

Armed Forces clash with guerrillas in Caqueta – early March 1998 (Open - Sources)

- COLAR suffered defeat at the hands of FARC unit
 - many soldiers killed
 - soldiers held by FARC
- International community voiced concern about possibility of increased number of civilian casualties during open warfare

Recap of Paramilitary and Guerrilla Activities for week ending March 2, 1998:

Following statistics included to provide example of number of human rights incidents in any given week (DTG 031321Z MAR 98 Unclas):

- Paramilitary forces believed responsible for deaths of 26 civilians in 5 separate incidents
- Guerrillas kidnapped 4 mayors and 2 local councilmen



(b)(4)