

# 1000 INDIANS MARCH TO PROTEST ARMY'S KILLING OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

(Colombia) Last November the principal Indian leader of the Arhuaco Indians, Luis Napoleón Torres, his brother, Angel María Torres, and another Arhuaco, Hugues Chaparro were travelling by bus from the local city of Valledupar, the Colombian capital of Bogotá. They were going to protest to government authorities about army and police harassment of their communities.

At a stop along the way, near the town of Curumaní, soldiers forced the three off the bus and took them away. The bus driver reported this to the local police but they appear to have done little or nothing. Two weeks later the Indians' bodies were discovered in three different places - all had been severely tortured.

About a thousand Indians later marched to Valledupar in protest and to take the bodies back to the mountains for traditional funeral rites. Two of the dead were traditional *mamo* (shamans) and all were highly respected Indian leaders.

On the same day as the three leaders disappeared, another Arhuaco, Vicente Villafañe, and his brother had their house searched for arms - none were found. They were taken to the army base in Valledupar where they were beaten and tortured. Two days later, November 30th, one of

them was taken by army helicopter to the Indian community of Vindivameina (Santo Domingo) where soldiers searched houses, shot their rifles into the air, and stole food from the school and equipment from the health post.

The Colombian army views all peasant and Indian communities as potential guerrilla collaborators. In other areas of Colombia, guerrillas themselves have killed Indian leaders who refuse to affiliate with their particular anti-government group of which there are several. In many areas the Indians suffer at the hands of both the rebel and government forces.

A Colombian court has begun an investigation into the killings but this is unlikely to bring any results without a show of support for the Indians and protests at the violations of their rights.

Please write to the President of Colombia, protesting the army's killing and torture of Indian people.

Señor Presidente  
Dr Cesar Gaviria, Presidente de la Republica  
Casa de Nariño, Carrera 8 No 7-26  
Bogotá, COLOMBIA



## Gran Chaco Indigenous Peoples Call for Land Commission

(Bolivia) Indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco region of the Bolivian Amazon have requested the Bolivian government to establish a commission to demarcate their territory. In an open letter to President Jaime Paz Zamora, the Mataco and Tapieté peoples, who live on the banks of the Pilcomayu River, informed the President that they conducted a general assembly last November (1990) in Villamontes. At the end of the gathering, they issued a resolution calling on the President to take immediate measures to halt the injustices and abuses they are suffering at the hands of colonists.

The resolution denounces the "...total paralysis of our attempts to acquire property rights and land titles, a process that has been detained by the National Agrarian Reform. We demand to be treated the same way as our Sirionó brothers and sisters at Ibiato. The Sirionó have been able to press for the approval of Supreme Decree # 22609 which declares as 'indigenous territory' the lands they inhabit." Indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco explain

that the agrarian reform paper work has been suspended. They are accusing the government of stalling the approval of previous documents. The Mataco and Tapieté said that in July of 1980, agrarian reform officers instructed them to proceed with the land title paper work and that native authorities visited the Indian communities to explain the objectives. With economic aid from the Swedish Mission in Bolivia, along with the approval of the agrarian reform officers, they initiated the paper work along legal paths. They paid the required fees to the local judge Hilda Palavisino, a secretary, and a land surveyor. The local judge is now advising cattle ranchers and pits them against the Indians. She has been responsible for the legal curtailment of paper work that was to benefit the Mataco.

In the meantime, the Mataco and Tapieté say that the governmental commission must be formed by the Ministry of Peasant Affairs, the Indigenist Institute, CIDOB (Indigenous Confederation of Eastern Bolivia) and representatives of the Mataco and Tapieté. They warn against colonizers encroaching on their lands. They also denounce Judge Hilda Palavisino for bias towards cattle ranchers because of her friendship and familial ties. "If our petition falls through, and is not resolved favorably and immediately, the Indigenous Peoples of the Gran Chaco will adopt other de facto measures," they warn.