

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

COLOMBIA

Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia department

Killed:

Luis Eduardo Guerra Guerra (m)
Bellanyra Areiza Guzmán (f), aged 17
Deiner Andrés Guerra (m), aged 11
Alfonso Bolívar Tuberquia Graciano (m)
Sandra Milena Muñoz Pozo (f)
Santiago Tuberquia Muñoz (m) aged 2
Natalia Andrea Tuberquia Muñoz (f), aged 6
Alejandro Pérez (m)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of inhabitants of the *Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó*, Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Apartadó Municipality, Antioquia department. In recent days, eight members of the community, including women and young children, have been killed by armed men who reportedly identified themselves as members of the Colombian army.

At about 11am on 21 February, Luis Eduardo Guerra Guerra, one of the leaders of the Peace Community, his partner Bellanyra Areiza Guzmán, his 11-year-old son, Deiner Andrés Guerra, and a witness who does not wish to be identified were in Mulatos, a community belonging to the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, when they were reportedly abducted by a group of armed men who identified themselves as members of the Colombian army. The men said they were going to take the four away to be killed. On hearing this, the witness managed to escape. On 22 February, the same witness reportedly visited the farm belonging to Alfonso Bolívar Tuberquia Graciano, another leader of the Peace Community. He reportedly found traces of blood in the farmhouse, and human remains outside it. He reported this to the authorities, and on 25 February, officials from the Attorney General's Office and Procurator General's Office travelled to the area to investigate. Five dismembered bodies were reportedly found in two graves near the farmhouse, and were identified as Alfonso Bolívar Tuberquia Graciano, his partner Sandra Milena Muñoz, his children Santiago Tuberquia Muñoz and Natalia Andrea Tuberquia Muñoz; and another local resident, Alejandro Pérez. On the same day, another grave containing the bodies of Luis Eduardo Guerra Guerra, Bellanyra Areiza Guzmán and Deiner Andrés Guerra was reportedly found between Mulatos and La Resbalosa, another community which belongs to the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.

According to witnesses, members of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian army have been carrying out military operations in the Mulatos area since 21 February. Soldiers in the area have reportedly told local inhabitants that if the killings had not been reported, they would have killed more civilians. The soldiers have allegedly referred to the eight victims as "dead guerrillas" ("*puro guerrillero muerto*").

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Luis Eduardo Guerra Guerra had represented the Peace Community in talks with the Colombian government on issues relating to the safety of the community's inhabitants. In 2002 he left the region due to fears for his safety, but returned in July 2004. On 11 August 2004, his wife was killed and his son Deiner injured when a grenade the army had reportedly left near their home exploded. The XVII Brigade reportedly stated that the Peace Community was storing the grenades for guerrilla forces. On 12 December 2004, members of the XVII Brigade reportedly held Luis Eduardo at a checkpoint near San José de Apartadó, interrogated him and accused him of being "suspicious" ("*persona sospechosa*").

The Peace Community was founded in March 1997 in an effort by the civilian population to insist on their right not to be drawn into Colombia's internal armed conflict. It has repeatedly been labelled as subversive by the security forces. These accusations have been followed by the reported killing and "disappearance" of over 100 of its members, by members of the army and their paramilitary allies, and also by the guerrilla group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

The latest killings have taken place during reported military operations by the XVII Brigade in the area. The killings coincide with the planned return of several families to the abandoned San José hamlet of La Esperanza on 23 March 2005. A previous attempt to repopulate the hamlet of La Esperanza coincided with the killing by paramilitaries of several inhabitants of the Peace Community in April 1999.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó;
- insisting that all measures deemed appropriate by them are taken to guarantee their safety and that of Colombian non-governmental human rights organizations who have denounced the killings;
- calling on the authorities to respect the right of the civilian population including the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó not to be drawn into the conflict;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the killings of eight people in the Peace Community, for the results to be made public, and for those responsible to be brought to justice and to ensure that in coordination with the Peace Community measures are taken to guarantee the safety of witnesses that testify to judicial authorities;
- expressing concern that if members of the army are found to be implicated in these killings, criminal investigations must take place outside the military justice system which has repeatedly failed to bring to justice members of the security forces implicated in serious human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890/342 0592

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dra. María Carolina Barco Isakson

Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores Interior y de Justicia, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 7822

Salutation: Dear Madam / Sra. Ministra

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite), Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (you will hear a message in Spanish asking you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Organizations

Corporación Jurídica Libertad, Carrera 47 N°53-45, Of.801, Medellín, 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 11 April 2005.