

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARY BUILD-UP IN PEACE COMMUNITY

Residents in several hamlets in or near the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in north-western Colombia continue to report the presence of paramilitaries. The security of Peace Community members and other inhabitants in the area is at serious risk.

On 22 January, paramilitaries again visited the home of **Reinaldo Areiza** in the hamlet of La Esperanza, but he was not at home at the time. The paramilitaries told residents in La Esperanza that they would not allow “snitches” (*sapos*) to enter the area, that those who do not collaborate with them have to leave or die, and that they are in control of the region with the authorization of the security forces. According to witnesses, the paramilitaries held a local family captive in their home in La Esperanza for several hours and showed them a death list of individuals, which included members of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**.

On 23 January, witnesses claim that a paramilitary, accompanied by two others, raped a 14-year-old girl at her home in the hamlet of La Hoz, and threatened to kill her if she reported the rape. Her parents are not members of the Peace Community but one of her other relatives is. On 27 January, paramilitaries threatened **Diana Guisao**, who has relatives who are members of the Peace Community, at her home in Mulato Medio. They showed her a death list, which included members of the Peace Community. That same day, paramilitaries entered the Peace Community’s “peace village” (*aldea de paz*) in the hamlet of Mulatos, which commemorates the 2005 massacre of eight Peace Community members. They photographed local residents and announced they would kill all “snitches”. Paramilitaries again entered the “peace village” on 1 February and threatened to kill members of the Peace Community, and again on 2 February, when they held two families captive for several minutes and threatening them with death. On 28 January, five paramilitaries entered a property owned by the Peace Community in La Esperanza and held captive two Peace Community members for several minutes. On 31 January, paramilitaries frequenting the hamlets of Mulatos and Resbalosa entered the homes of several *campesino* (peasant farmer) families and stole clothing, chickens and other food supplies from them.

International observers are currently in the area and have witnessed the presence of paramilitaries in and around the Peace Community. Some of the paramilitaries are wearing military fatigues, are hooded and have armbands of the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Reinaldo Areiza, Diana Guisao, the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments;
- Reminding them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and other civilians living in the area, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 MARCH 2017 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 596 0631

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

Defence Minister

Señor Luis Carlos Villegas
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

Peace Community
 Comunidad de Paz de
 San José de Apartadó
 AA 243 de Apartadó
 Antioquia, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 236/16. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/5576/2017/en/

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARY BUILD-UP IN PEACE COMMUNITY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is made up of people living in a number of hamlets in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who maintain their right to not be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict and refuse to take sides with any of the parties to the conflict. They refuse to bear arms or provide information or logistical support to either side. In return, the members of the Peace Community demand that the parties to the conflict stay out of their communities and respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with the warring parties.

Since the Peace Community was established on 23 March 1997, more than 200 of its members have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance, while others have been threatened or sexually assaulted. Those in the Peace Community are in constant danger. The majority of those killed lost their lives at the hands of paramilitaries, who have often operated with the support and acquiescence of members of the armed forces in the area. Guerrilla forces have also killed members of the Peace Community. Over the last decade many civilians who are not members of the Peace Community, but have links to them or live in the area, have also been killed.

In late 2016, members of the Peace Community reported an increase in paramilitary activity, with scores of paramilitaries, some in military fatigues and identifying themselves as members of the AGC, being intermittently camped in various parts of the community. Between 15 and 19 January 2017, further paramilitary incursions occurred in several hamlets in or near the Peace Community. This increase in paramilitary activity since late 2016 puts members of the Peace Community and other local inhabitants at risk.

Despite their supposed demobilization a decade ago, paramilitaries continue to operate in various parts of the country. According to the latest report on the human rights situation in Colombia, published in March 2016, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that paramilitary groups (referred to as “post-demobilization groups” in the report) “constantly undermine human rights and citizen security, the administration of justice and peacebuilding, including land restitution. Dismantling the groups that control stolen land through the use or threat of violence represents a permanent challenge to peace”.

Name: Reinaldo Areiza (m), Diana Guisao (f), Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 236/16 Index: AMR 23/5614/2017 Issue Date: 3 February 2017