

URGENT ACTION

PEACE COMMUNITY THREATENED WITH A MASSACRE

Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó were threatened with a massacre in the context of increased paramilitary presence in the area.

On 23 February a man called a member of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, and told him that a new massacre of the Peace Community was planned. He also told him that the leaders of the Peace Community were the target and that they should take care of the children and not let them out in the streets. The threats come shortly after a decision made by an administrative tribunal on 8 February found that the Colombian State must apologise to the members of the Peace Community for its part in the February 2005 massacre in which eight people (including four children) were killed and their bodies mutilated in a joint army-paramilitary operation. No high-ranking officials of the armed forces have as yet been convicted for these crimes, although a number of paramilitaries and army soldiers were convicted for their role in the 2005 killings.

Witnesses reported that between 11 and 16 February 2013, several trucks transported paramilitaries from the neighbouring department of Chocó to three paramilitary bases in the vicinity of the hamlets of the Peace Community: Piedras Blancas in Carepa municipality; Nueva Antioquia in Turbo Municipality; and a base on the road to Zunguito. The trucks drove through areas with constant military and police roadblocks, without being stopped. Paramilitaries have been able to maintain a strong presence in the San José de Apartadó area despite the fact it is heavily-militarized.

Over recent years Amnesty International has received repeated reports and repeatedly denounced the presence of a paramilitary base in Nueva Antioquia. Despite this, the Colombian authorities have failed to take decisive action to confront the paramilitary presence in the area.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, especially their leaders, in light of the threat of a new massacre;
- Urging the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into this threat and the increased presence of paramilitaries, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 APRIL 2013 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 Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

**Salutation: Dear Minister Pinzón/
 Sr. Ministro Pinzón**

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 check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is made up of people living in a number of hamlets and villages 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, they 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's establishment in 23 March 1997, more than 170 of its members and other civilians living in the area 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 operate 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 who are close to them or living in the area, have also been killed. Many of the killings have coincided with periods of intense threats against the Peace Community and appear to have been part of attempts to intimidate its members.

Civilians who maintain their right not to be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict are met with suspicion and hostility from the army, the paramilitaries, and guerrilla groups.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the killing of human rights defenders, and the threats against them and other vulnerable sectors of civilian society in different parts of the country, that they are still operating.

Name: members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

Gender m/f: both

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