

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/possible disappearance

30 October 2002

COLOMBIA

Arnulfo Tuberquia (m) peasant, inhabitant of the Peace  
Community of San José de Apartadó

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Arnulfo Tuberquia, an inhabitant of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was reportedly abducted by paramilitary forces between 20 and 23 October. His current whereabouts are unknown and there are fears for his safety.

A large group of army-backed paramilitaries reportedly entered a small cluster of houses in the hamlets of La Unión and El Porvenir, within the community of San José de Apartadó on 20 October. They remained in the area for three days, during which time they harassed the inhabitants of the Peace Community, stole their goods and accused the population of being guerrilla collaborators. They reportedly also abducted three other inhabitants of the region who were later released.

Although the incursion was reported to national authorities, according to information received, the armed forces did not arrive in La Unión until 24 October when the paramilitary forces had already left.

Army forces have remained in the area and according to reports, have been stealing food and supplies from civilians. On 26 October, army forces reportedly detained several peasants as they made their way from El Porvenir to the San José de Apartadó town centre. The peasants were threatened that there would be another paramilitary incursion against the hamlets. Many members of the community have been forced to flee to the village of San José de Apartadó.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is situated in the municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia. In March 1997, the inhabitants of 17 communities of San José de Apartadó declared themselves to be a Peace Community, insisting that combatants remain outside their community. As such, they called upon the security forces, their paramilitary allies and armed opposition groups, to respect their rights as civilians not to be drawn into the conflict and to respect their right to life. Since March 1997, more than 70 members of the community have been killed by army-backed paramilitaries and armed opposition groups. The vast majority of the killings have been committed by army-backed paramilitaries, who have been able to set up check-points and operate unchallenged in the area despite the heavy presence of the armed forces in the region.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Arnulfo Tuberquia, who has not been seen since 20 October, and urging the authorities to do everything necessary to find him;
- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, in Antioquia department, following the most recent incursion;
- asking the authorities what measures, deemed appropriate by those under threat themselves, they are going to take to guarantee the safety of those at risk;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the incursion and the threats of further incursions, for the results to be made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- expressing concern about the increasing army-backed paramilitary presence in the region and urging the authorities to take action to protect the civilian population;
- reminding the authorities that if they fail to protect the civilian population, it will seem that the paramilitaries are operating with the complicity of the security forces;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Antioquia, urging

that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;  
 - urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated United Nations recommendations.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No. 7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Uribe, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 20 71/576 20 78**

**Salutation: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President**

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos,

Ministro del Interior y de Justicia

Ministerio del Interior

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 4573**

**Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro**

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz,

Defensor del Pueblo,

Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 640 0491**

**Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifiente/ Estimado Sr. Cifuentes**

**COPIES TO:**

Non-governmental Human Rights Organization

Corporación Jurídica Libertad

Carrera 47 N°50-24, of.510

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and 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 December 2002.