

UA 42/00

Fear for**COLOMBIA Inhabitants of San José de Apartadó and other communities in Antioquia and Chocó departments****Killed: José Ubaldo QUINTERO; Edgar Mario URREGO OSORIO; Luis Eduardo Ciro ARISTIZÁBAL; Alonso JIMÉNEZ; Albeiro MONTOYA**

Paramilitaries have reportedly killed five people in a "Peace Community" in northern Colombia. The army has reportedly accused Peace Communities in the region of harbouring guerrillas, most recently in January 2000, and no attempt has been made to bring to justice those responsible for previous attacks. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of this and other Peace Communities.

Some 20 gunmen in military uniforms, wearing paramilitary armbands, went into the community of San José de Apartadó on 19 February at about 7.30pm. They split into four groups: one went into a billiard bar and ordered the men inside to lie on the floor and not look at them. When Edgar Mario Urrego did not obey, and reportedly said that he recognised some of the gunmen as soldiers, they shot him dead.

Another group went to the Pentecostal church, where they forced José Ubaldo Quintero out of the building and shot him several times in the head, killing him instantly. Luis Ciro Aristizábal and Alonso Jiménez were forced out of their homes and shot dead. Albeiro Montoya was killed in the town square. Two other members of the community were reportedly wounded. The paramilitaries had apparently picked out their victims from a list.

A number of witnesses reportedly saw the insignia of the army's *Brigada XVII*, XVII Brigade, on the gunmen's uniforms. Before this attack a large number of troops from the XVII Brigade were reportedly seen in La Balsa, a community on the road from San José de Apartadó to Apartadó. The 20 gunmen were apparently seen in military uniforms a short distance down the road to San José de Apartadó from the XVII Brigade troops, encamped in a farm called La Guatinaja in the community of Caracolí. They were seen there from 11am to 6.40pm, when they began to make their way towards San José de Apartadó.

The community of San José de Apartadó, in Antioquia department, is made up of around 1,000 people forcibly displaced from their homes in the Urabá region of north-western Colombia in 1996 and 1997 by massacres committed by army-backed paramilitary groups and guerrilla organizations. In March 1997 they declared themselves a *Comunidad de Paz*, Peace Community, in an attempt to persuade the warring factions to respect their neutrality and right to life. Since then, some 65 residents have "disappeared" or been killed, the majority by army-backed paramilitary groups, others by members of the Colombian army or the armed opposition group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Neither side accepts the community's right to neutrality. While these human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law go on, senior armed forces commanders and political leaders accuse the community of being guerrilla sympathizers, because they refuse to allow any armed group, including the army, to maintain a presence there. On 2 January 2000 a Colombian television news program reported that the army was accusing Peace Communities in Antioquia and Chocó of serving as bases for guerrillas to launch attacks.

San José de Apartadó was the scene of another paramilitary massacre on 4 April 1999.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:**

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attack on the community of San José de Apartadó on 19 February, in which five people died and at least two were seriously injured;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of all inhabitants of the community of San José de Apartadó and Peace Communities in the department of Chocó, urging the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by the communities themselves to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the XVII Brigade and paramilitary groups in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and UN recommendations.

**Please also raise these concerns with your own government - over the last year delegations from a number of governments have been informed of the situation facing the Peace Communities of Antioquia and Chocó and expressed support for these civilian initiatives, and have travelled to these communities or met with representatives from these communities. Urge your government to publicly condemn the latest attack and to monitor the efforts of the Colombian government to ensure that this attack is fully investigated, those responsible are brought to justice and action is taken to combat paramilitary groups in the region.**

**APPEALS TO:**

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República  
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telex: 44281 PALP CO**

**Fax: + 57 1 286 7434/ 284 2186/ 337 1351**

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

Minister of Defence

Dr. Luis Fernando Ramírez Acuña  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telexes: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Faxes: + 57 1 222 1874**

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

Commander of the Armed Forces

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin  
Comandante de las Fuerzas Militares  
Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá  
Colombia

**Telegrams: Comandante Fuerzas Militares, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 222 2096**

**Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander**

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

Dr. Alberto Builes Ortega, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia  
Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia**

**Fax: + 574 381 1342**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz

AA 31861

Santafé de Bogotá

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 3 April 2000.