

URGENT ACTION

COLOMBIAN PEACE COMMUNITY THREATENED

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in north-western Colombia has been repeatedly threatened by paramilitaries. Following the killing of Bernardo Londoño, who has close links with the Community, on 22 March, Amnesty International fears for the safety of the Community members.

On 2 April paramilitaries passed the hamlet of Arenas Altas in the municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia, which is part of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, accusing the members of the community of being guerrillas. They threatened them, saying that they would pay dearly and that things would not stay as they were. Members of the community have reported that later in the day an armed forces' helicopter collected the bodies of paramilitaries killed in fighting between paramilitaries and guerrilla on the previous day in Arenas Altas.

On 22 March, two paramilitaries on a motorbike followed the car in which Jesús Emilio Tuberquia, the legal representative of the Peace Community, was travelling to the community. They approached the car when it passed through the area of Tierra Amarilla but realized Jesús Emilio Tuberquia had international accompaniment and so stayed where they were. A few minutes later Bernardo Rios Londoño, whose children live in the Peace Community and who had met Jesus Emilio earlier that day, came along on his bicycle. The paramilitaries killed him. On 14 March two men had been looking for Jesús Emilio Tuberquia at his home in San Josecito. One of the men was seen in company of members of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian Army in the area a few days later.

On 23 March, the day of the 14th anniversary of the creation of the Peace Community, paramilitaries told a member of the Peace Community that the community had to leave or that otherwise killings would continue and that they already had planned with the security forces to "exterminate" the community.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Spanish or your own language:

- Express concern for the safety of the members of the Peace Community of San José, particularly Jesús Emilio Tuberquia and his family;
- Urge the Colombian authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the killing of Bernardo Rios Londoño and the threats against members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.
- Remind the Colombian authorities of the right of civilians – including members of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community -not to be drawn into the armed conflict.
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 MAY 2011 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**

Defense Minister

Señor Rodrigo Rivera Salazar
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá COLOMBIA
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003 (say "me da tono
 de fax, por favor")

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

And copies to:

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.

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 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó consists of individuals living in a number of hamlets and villages in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who defend their right not to be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict and refuse to take sides with any of the parties to the conflict. The Peace Community refuses to bear arms or to provide information or logistical support to either side. In return, they demand that the parties to the conflict do not enter their communities and that they respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with the warring parties.

Since the Peace Community's formation on 23 March 1997, more than 170 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 these killings have been carried out by paramilitaries who continue to operate with the support and acquiescence of members of the armed forces in the area. Guerrilla forces have also been responsible for killings of 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 coincide with periods of intense threats against the Peace Community and appear to be part of attempts to intimidate its members.

Civilians who defend their right not to be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict and refuse to take sides with the warring parties are met with suspicion and hostility from the army, the paramilitaries and guerrilla groups. The right of the civilian population not to be drawn into conflict has been repeatedly violated: they have been forced to take sides, or killed when they refuse.

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

During the course of the conflict, the security forces and paramilitary groups have frequently labelled human rights organizations and trade unions as guerrilla collaborators or supporters, and have gone on to threaten, abduct or kill them. Guerrilla groups have also threatened or killed human rights defenders, trade unionists and other civilians they consider to be siding with their enemies.

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