

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/010/2007

16 May 2007

Further Information on UA 48/05 (AMR 23/003/2005, 28 February 2005) and follow ups (AMR 23/043/2005, 16 December 2005; AMR 23/010/2006, 13 March 2006; AMR 23/011/2006, 16 March 2006; AMR 23/042/2006, 4 October 2006; AMR 23/003/2007, 7 February 2007) – Fear for safety

**COLOMBIA**      **Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (Antioquia Department)**  
**Killed: Francisco Puerta (m), peasant leader**

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A peasant leader living in an area associated with the San José de Apartadó Peace Community has been shot dead by army-backed paramilitaries, and both paramilitaries and the army have threatened community members. Paramilitaries are reportedly planning to attack the community.

Though he was not a member of the Peace Community, peasant farmers' leader Francisco Puerta lived in the hamlet of Miramar, which is linked to the Peace Community. On 14 May at 7am he was reportedly approached by two local paramilitary gunmen, in the bus station in the municipality of Apartadó. They demanded his identity papers. After checking his papers, a witness heard the men say, "*Este hijo de puta es de esa hija de puta comunidad*" ("This son of a bitch is from that son of a bitch community.") They then shot him. The gunmen were reportedly able to leave unchallenged, although there were police officers nearby.

On 9 May three peasant women involved with the Peace community were reportedly stopped at a paramilitary checkpoint in El Mangolo, the last neighbourhood on the outskirts of Apartadó on the road to San José de Apartadó. The men at the checkpoint were heavily armed and said they were members of the **Aguilas Negras (Black Eagles)** paramilitary group. They said they had been looking for the three women, but were ordered to let them go after radioing their commander to say that the women's identity papers did not match the names they were looking for. They told the women they would be killed if they told anyone what had happened.

On 13 May, a businessman from Apartadó visiting the Peace Community told them that paramilitaries had been overheard discussing a plan to attack them. The paramilitary plan reportedly consisted of killing community leaders to weaken the community and to cause large numbers to flee the area.

Soldiers have also threatened members of the Peace Community. On 9 April, close to the community, soldiers approached two inhabitants demanding to know where they would find a woman, a member of the community. They said that they would capture her dead or alive, but **preferably dead**.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created by civilians living in the San José de Apartadó area of the municipality of Apartadó in March 1997, in an effort to persuade both the armed forces and guerrillas to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running conflict. The Peace Community has always insisted that combatants remain outside its homes and farmland. As a result the security forces and their paramilitary allies have accused the community of subversion. The guerrilla group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)*, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, have in turn accused the community of cooperating with their enemies. Since the Peace Community was created, over 160 of its members have been killed or have been the victims of enforced disappearances the vast majority at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies, the remainder at the hands of the FARC.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States has called on the Colombian authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of inhabitants of the Peace Community, but the authorities appear to have taken little action to implement the Court's requests.

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process. Despite this, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating with the cooperation of the security forces. It appears that many paramilitary groups have not demobilized at all, but are continuing to operate, often using new names in an attempt to cover up the fact that they have not actually demobilized. Recent public statements by paramilitary organizations have made clear that their command structures remain intact.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, following the 14 May killing of Francisco Puerta, and reports that paramilitaries are threatening to attack;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the killing of Francisco Puerta and into the reported paramilitary threats against members of the Peace Community, for the results to be made public, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety of the Peace Community, whose lives are in danger, as deemed appropriate by the community themselves,
- calling on the authorities to take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592**

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

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Dr. Carlos Holguín Sardi

Ministro del Interior y Justicia

Ministerio Del Interior Y De Justicia, Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá D.C. Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 560 46 30**

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

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4

Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)**

**Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal/Dear Mr Iguarán**

**COPIES TO:**

Human Rights Ombudsman

Sr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 oficina 301, 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 28 June 2007.