

PUBLIC

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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) – Fear for safety

COLOMBIA Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

On 25 September a group of armed men who identified themselves as members of the army-backed paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia, reportedly made fresh threats to kill the leaders of the *Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó*, Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, in the municipality of Apartadó, Antioquia Department.

According to reports, a group of between 30 and 40 armed men, some bearing handkerchiefs across their faces with the words *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* and others with armbands with the initials AUC, entered a home near to San Josecito, a camp set up by members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in 2005. The gunmen demanded information about the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, to help them in their mission to eliminate the Peace Community.

The paramilitaries reportedly produced a list of names and said that they intended to kill various Peace Community leaders and their aides. The gunmen also demanded to know whether the “*gringos*” were in the area, adding that it is the “*gringos*” that prevent the AUC attacking the Peace Community. They said that sooner or later they would carry out the attack and they would clean up the guerrilla zone, saying that members of the Peace Community were guerrillas. It is thought that the “*gringos*” is a reference to international human rights workers accompanying the Peace Community. The armed men then left, threatening to kill anyone that spoke about the visit.

There is serious concern for the safety of the Peace Community, given that in the past those labelled to be subversives by the security forces or their paramilitary allies have frequently been the victims of serious human rights violations committed by these forces

It is of concern that a large numbers of paramilitaries were able to enter the area around San Josecito, despite the fact that the area is usually heavily-militarized. San Josecito is a short distance from the village of San José de Apartadó, where there is reported to be a permanent army and police presence. More army personnel are reported to be stationed close by. Paramilitary forces operating in the region are supposed to have been demobilized in recent years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The civilian population created the "Peace Community" of San José de Apartadó in March 1997, in an effort to persuade both the armed forces and the guerrillas to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running conflict. The security forces and their paramilitary allies on the one side and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, guerrilla forces on the other have each accused the community of cooperating with their enemies. Since the Peace Community was created over 160 of its members have been killed or have "disappeared", the vast majority at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitaries 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, most recently in a Resolution of 15 March 2005, but this appears to have had no effect.

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 reports that paramilitaries are threatening to kill community leaders and accusing its inhabitants of being guerrillas;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into 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;
- expressing concern that the lives of other members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó are at risk, and calling on the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety of the community, as deemed appropriate by the community themselves, in line with the Resolution issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States on 15 March 2005;
- calling on the authorities to respect the right of the civilian population, including the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, not to be drawn into the long-running conflict in Colombia;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Antioquia, given that reports indicate a large number of paramilitaries were able to enter the area around San Josecito despite the fact that the area is usually heavily-militarized and despite the fact that paramilitaries in the area have supposedly been demobilized;
- urging that the results are made public and those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice.

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 Foreign Affairs

Dra. María Consuelo Araújo

Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Calle 10 No 5-51, Palacio de San Carlos, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 562 7822

Salutation: Dear Madam / Sra. Ministra

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite)

Bogotá, Colombia

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

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Germán/ Dear Mr Germán

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 15 November 2006.