

URGENT ACTION

FURTHER PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY IN PEACE COMMUNITY

There have been further paramilitary incursions into several hamlets in or near the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in north-western Colombia. This is posing an increasing risk to the security of Peace Community members and others in the area.

On 15 January, dozens of heavily-armed men who identified themselves as members of the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC) entered the hamlets of La Unión, Buenos Aires and Arenas Altas. In La Unión on the same day, witnesses claim a group of paramilitaries threatened to kill two members of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** if the Community refused to collaborate with them. On 16 January, a group of armed paramilitaries entered the hamlet of Claras where they rounded up a number of residents and told them they had to collaborate with them.

On 17 January, paramilitaries visited the home where some members of the Peace Community live in Arenas Altas and told them that if the community did not keep quiet they would kill its leaders. That same day, paramilitaries visited the home of **Reinaldo Areiza**, who is close to the Community and who was not at home at the time, in the hamlet of La Esperanza. According to witnesses, the paramilitaries said they were "after his head". A group of five paramilitaries again visited the home of Reinaldo Areiza on 20 January, but he was not at home.

On 19 January, paramilitaries entered the hamlet of Resbalosa and, according to witnesses, threatened the residents by telling them they had "control over all the hamlets, that only the settlements of those sons-of-bitches of the community were left. That they had the green light to eliminate that son-of-a-bitch community if it didn't submit to them". That same day, residents in the hamlets of La Hoz and Rodoxalí reported paramilitaries were also present.

According to witnesses, during these latest incursions, which are ongoing, some of the paramilitaries had been seen fraternizing with members of the security forces stationed in the area.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of Reinaldo Areiza, the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area;
- Urging them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments;
- Reminding them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and other civilians living in the area, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 MARCH 2017 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**

Defence Minister

Señor Luis Carlos Villegas
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

Salutation: Dear Minister / Sr. Ministro

And copies to:

Peace Community
 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 insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 236/16. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/4998/2016/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is made up of people living in a number of hamlets in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who maintain their right to not be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict and refuse to take sides with any of the parties to the conflict. They refuse to bear arms or provide information or logistical support to either side. In return, the members of the Peace Community demand that the parties to the conflict stay out of their communities and respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with the warring parties.

Since the Peace Community was established on 23 March 1997, more than 200 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 those killed lost their lives at the hands of paramilitaries, who have often operated with the support and acquiescence of members of the armed forces in the area. Guerrilla forces have also killed members of the Peace Community. Over the last decade many civilians who are not members of the Peace Community, but have links to them or live in the area, have also been killed. In late 2016, members of the Peace Community reported an increase in paramilitary activity, with scores of paramilitaries, some in military fatigues and identifying themselves as members of the AGC, being intermittently camped in various parts of the community and putting its members and other local inhabitants at risk.

Despite their supposed demobilization a decade ago, paramilitaries continue to operate in various parts of the country. According to the latest report on the human rights situation in Colombia, published in March 2016, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that paramilitary groups (referred to as “post-demobilization groups” in the report) “constantly undermine human rights and citizen security, the administration of justice and peacebuilding, including land restitution. Dismantling the groups that control stolen land through the use or threat of violence represents a permanent challenge to peace”.

Name: Reinaldo Areiza (m), Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 236/16 Index: AMR 23/5576/2017 Issue Date: 26 January 2017