

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/010/2006

13 March 2006

Further Information on UA 48/05 (AMR 23/003/2005, 28 February 2005) and follow-up (AMR 23/043/2005, 16 December 2005) - Fear for safety and new concern: Possible "disappearance"

COLOMBIA **Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia department**
New name: Nelly Johana Durango (f), aged 18

A young woman has reportedly been abducted by soldiers in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. The rest of the community are in grave danger.

Soldiers on patrol in the La Resbalosa area of the community apparently forced 18-year-old Nelly Johana Durango out of her home at 5pm on 4 March. Residents of the Peace Community informed the regional ombudsman's office (*Defensoría*), who deals with complaints of human rights violations, but as yet the authorities have provided no information about the whereabouts of Nelly Johana Durango.

At the time of the abduction, members of the community were apparently making plans to return to the hamlets of La Esperanza and Mulatos, lands they had been forced to flee to escape attack by either the armed forces and paramilitaries, or guerrillas of the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Earlier attempts to return to lands they had abandoned have appeared to trigger attacks by the security forces or their paramilitary allies.

On 17 November 2005 one of the leaders of the Peace Community, Arlen Rodrigo Salas David, was reportedly fatally wounded by a grenade thrown by soldiers of the XVII Brigade, as he was working in a maize field in the Arenas Altas area of the community. The troops reportedly opened fire, keeping other members of the community from coming to help him, and by the time they reached him he was dead. The army later reportedly claimed that they had been shooting at guerrillas.

Another member of the Peace Community, Edilberto Vásquez Cardona, was reportedly killed by the army in the Arenas Altas area on 12 January. The army reportedly denied responsibility, saying he had been killed by guerrilla forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The civilian population created the "Peace Community" of San José de Apartadó in 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 FARC guerrilla forces on the other have each accused the community of cooperating with their enemies. Since the Peace Community was created over 150 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 of the abduction of 18-year-old Nelly Johana Durango;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the abduction, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to conduct a full and impartial investigation to establish her whereabouts, and ensure that she is released unharmed;
- if she is in their custody, urging the authorities to charge her with a recognizably criminal offence or release her immediately;
- 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 conflict.

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 Carolina Barco Isakson

Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores Interior y de Justicia, 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:

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 24 March 2006.