

9 May 2002

Further information on UA 98/02 (AMR 23/034/02, 2 April 2002) and follow-up (AMR 23/043/2002, 23 April 2002) - Fear for Safety

Eulises Trejo (m)

Population of San José de Apartadó

Killed: Fernando Puerta (m)
Dario Graciano Usuga (m)
Alexander Graciano (m)
Samuel Graciano (m)

Army-backed paramilitaries have reportedly killed several members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and threatened to kill others. They are still blockading the community, whose food supplies are running out.

Fernando Puerta was killed on 29 April, near the hamlet of La Unión, which is part of the Peace Community. The other three men were shot dead in the hamlet of El Porvenir on 1 May. The gunmen were reportedly wearing insignia of the paramilitary group *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia.

On 4 May, 200 paramilitary gunmen reportedly went into La Unión and searched the houses. The gunmen reportedly threatened religious workers, who are staying in the community to give some protection by their presence, and threatened to attack the Peace Community's main hamlet, San José de Apartadó. They declared that they were going to "acabar con esos guerrilleros", "finish off those guerrillas".

The security forces and their paramilitary allies have frequently accused the inhabitants of the Peace Community of being guerrillas. After these accusations the community have often come under attack in paramilitary operations coordinated or supported by the security forces. The Peace Community itself calls on both sides in the conflict to respect their right to life and not to be drawn into the conflict.

Nine banana workers were killed on 26 April, in the municipality of Apartadó. The authorities blamed the killings on the armed opposition group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

The security forces have responded to previous FARC attacks by increasing their accusations that the Peace Community is linked to the guerrillas. This has been followed by further human rights violations against the community.

The San José de Apartadó Peace Community and non-governmental human rights organizations requested that the government set up a special commission to investigate the continuing grave human rights violations and abuses suffered by the community. A *Comisión de Investigación y Seguimiento*, Investigation and Follow-Up Commission, made up of State and government bodies, non-governmental human rights organizations and representatives of the Peace Community has been established.

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

- urging the authorities to investigate the killings of Fernando Puerta, Dario Graciano Usuga, Alexander Graciano and Samuel Graciano, in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó on 29 April and 1 May, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging them to ensure that the *Comisión de Investigación y Seguimiento* undertakes full and impartial investigations into these killings and other paramilitary operations, that the results are made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Antioquia, with the results made public and those members of the security forces responsible for supporting and operating in unison with paramilitaries to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups in the municipality of Apartadó and the whole of Antioquia, in line with government commitments and repeated recommendations made by the United Nations.
- urging them to order full and impartial investigations into the 26 April killing of nine banana workers in the municipality of Apartadó, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President of Colombia

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana, Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: President Pastrana, Bogotá, Colombia

Telex: 44281 PALP CO

Fax: + 57 1 566 2071

Salutation: Dear President Pastrana / Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente Pastrana

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Telegram: National Advocate, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 640 0491

Salutation: Dear Mr. Cifuentes Muñoz / Estimado Sr. Cifuentes Muñoz

Commander of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian Army

Comandante XVII Brigada del Ejército Nacional

General Pablo Rodríguez Laverde

Carepa, Urabá, COLOMBIA

Telegrams: Comandante, XVII Brigada Ejército, Carepa, Antioquia, COLOMBIA

Fax: +57 4 823 6844 (Say "Me da el tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Commander Rodríguez / Sr. Comandante Rodríguez

COPIES TO:

Non-governmental human rights organization

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz

AA 31861, Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.