

**PUBLIC**

**AI Index: AMR 23/053/2003**

**06 August 2003**

**Further Information on UA 50/03 (AMR 23/020/2003, 21 February 2003) Fear for safety**

**COLOMBIA      Wilson David Higuita (m) ] community leaders  
                  Gildardo Tuberquia (m) ]**

**Other members of the Peace Community of Paz San José de Apartadó, Antioquia department**

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Wilson David Higuita and the other members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. This follows threats against them by army-backed paramilitaries operating in the area.

Members of the XVII army Brigade were reportedly in the urban centre of San José de Apartadó on 3 August. They allegedly stopped children on their way to school and asked them about the whereabouts of Wilson David Higuita, who was previously detained by the XVII Brigade in February, and accused of being a guerrilla collaborator.

On 4 August, eight army-backed paramilitaries were reportedly seen on motorbikes in the area of Sitio Tierra Amarilla on the road leading to San José de Apartadó. The paramilitaries were reportedly checking all the vehicles using the road.

According to information received, on 5 and 6 July, leaders of the army-backed paramilitaries operating in the area called for meetings with the civilian population, which they forced them to attend. The purpose of these meetings was to present their plans for a tighter control of the community. This would involve taking total control of the transportation of food in to the community, threatening to make those who attempt to bring goods to the population “disappear”, and also threatening to kill five leaders of the community or human rights activist who support them. Two names were specifically mentioned, including that of Wilson David Higuita. The paramilitaries also intended to set up road-blocks at the entrance to San José, in order to force drivers to inform them about the presence of guerrilla members in the community. Those who fail to do so would be killed.

There is currently no further information on the fate of Gildardo Tuberquia, who was also briefly detained by the XVII Brigade in February and accused of being a guerrilla collaborator.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created in 1997 in an effort by the civilian population to call on warring factions to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running conflict. Both the security forces and their paramilitary allies on the one hand and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrilla forces on the other, have accused the members of the community of cooperating with their enemies. These accusations have been followed by repeated death threats against members of the Peace Community and the killing and “disappearance” of over 70 members of the Peace Community, the vast majority committed by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. The security forces have continually threatened the Peace Community with paramilitary incursions and threatened to end the Peace Community model. Amnesty International has expressed its concerns for the safety of the community in external documents (see AMR 23/23/00), press releases (AMR 23/047/2002) and Urgent Actions (see UA 98/02, AMR 23/034/02, 2 April 2002 and its updates AMR 23/043/02, 23 April 2002 and AMR 23/051/02, 9 May 2002).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Wilson David Higuita and members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, following threats against them by army-backed paramilitaries operating in the area;
- insisting that all measures deemed appropriate by the members of the community themselves, and Wilson David Higuita are taken into account in order to guarantee their safety;
- urging that the authorities should continue to respect the right of the civilian population not to be drawn into the conflict and so respect the right of San José de Apartadó not to be militarized.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram:      Presidente de la República, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax:             + 57 1 337 58 90/ 342 05 92**

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

Minister of Defence

Ministra de Defensa Nacional

Martha Lucía Ramírez de Rincón

Ministerio de Defensa Nacional

Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52 OFI. 217

Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN)

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram:      Ministra Defensa, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax:             + 57 1 266 0193**

**Salutation:    Sra Ministra/Dear Minister**

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación

Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B 52-01

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram:      Fiscal General, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax:             + 57 1 570 2022 / 2017 (if someone answers say “me da tono de fax por favor”)**

**Salutation:    Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio**

**COPIES TO:**

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

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 16 September 2003.