

31 July 2001

Further information on UA 52/01 (AMR 23/029/2001, 9 March 2001) - Fear for Safety

COLOMBIAInhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

Killed: Alexander Guzmán[m], age 17

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Army-backed paramilitaries have entered the hamlet of La Unión and forcibly rounded up members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. At the site of a previous massacre, in the centre of the hamlet, they threatened to kill the villagers who refuse to collaborate with them, if they do not leave the area. A boy who tried to escape after being dragged from his home was killed. Despite repeated warnings of an impending attack, the government has failed to take effective action.

In the morning of 30 July, 15 heavily armed paramilitaries entered the hamlet of La Unión, one of the 17 villages that make up the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, in the department of Antioquia. Three hundred others remained in the mountains surrounding the hamlet. The 15 armed men, who villagers reportedly recognised as members of the security forces, went from house to house forcing the families to go to the centre of the hamlet. Some members of the Peace Community who hid in their homes were beaten and forced to join the other villagers. Others tried to escape. Alexander Guzman, aged 17, who had hidden in his house, was forcibly removed. He was reportedly shot as he fled towards the mountains. His body was later found with several gunshot wounds.

The paramilitaries reportedly told the villagers: "Don't run, the hamlet is totally surrounded... we are the same people who carried out the massacre of 8 July [2000]... You have to work with us if you don't want to leave or die. We want you to be neutral so that you can work with us... those of you who leave or flee, do so because you're guerillas. We will kill those of you who flee." (*"No corran, todo el caserío está rodeado... somos los mismos que hicimos la masacre del 8 de julio [de 2000]... ustedes tienen que trabajar con nosotros si no quieren irse o morir. Eso es lo que nosotros queremos que ustedes sean neutrales pero trabajando con nosotros... El que se vaya o huya es porque es guerrillero. Al que huya lo vamos a matar".*)

During the incursion the paramilitaries asked for the names of the community leaders and for the name of the person who operates the telephone. They also asked about other forms of radio communication to which the community has access.

Previously, on 8 July 2001, some 20 hooded men went into La Unión and rounded up the inhabitants in the middle of the village. They separated the men from the women and children, and shot six men. Following the attack the 63 families of La Unión temporarily fled their homes. An army helicopter apparently from the XVII Brigade hovered over the village throughout the attack (see UA 205/00, AMR 23/055/00, 10 July 2000).

Seventeen of the 32 communities which make up San José de Apartadó declared themselves a *Comunidad de Paz*, Peace Community, in March 1997, with the support of the Catholic Church and a number of Colombian non-governmental human rights organizations. This was an attempt to persuade the warring factions on both

sides to respect their right to life and neutrality in the conflict. They have, however, continued to face intimidation, torture and death at the hands of FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, an armed opposition group), the army and the paramilitaries.

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

- calling for a full and impartial investigation into the attack on the community of San José de Apartadó on 30 July 2001, in which Alexander Guzmán was shot;
- expressing serious concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community in Antioquia, especially those in the hamlet of La Unión, urging the authorities to take all measures deemed appropriate by the communities themselves to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the XVII Brigade and paramilitary groups in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, for the results to be made public and for those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and UN recommendations.

**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: Excelentísimo Sr. Presidente/Dear President Pastrana**

Minister of Defence

Dr. Gustavo Bell Lemus  
Ministro de Defensa Nacional  
Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
Avenida Eldorado CAN - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegrams: Ministro de Defensa, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Telex: 42411 INPRE CO; 44561 CFAC CO**

**Fax: + 57 1 286 4126 / 281 1213 / 222 1874**

**Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister**

Commander of the Armed Forces

General Fernando Tapias Stahelin  
Comandante de las Fuerzas Militares  
Avenida El Dorado - Carrera 52  
Santafé de Bogotá  
Colombia

**Telegrams: Comandante Fuerzas Militares, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 222 2096 / 221 3653 / 221 3935**

**Salutation: Sr. Comandante/Dear Commander**

Governor of the Department of Antioquia

Dr. Guillermo Gaviria Correa, Gobernador del Departamento de Antioquia  
Gobernación de Antioquia, Calle 42B, # 52-106, Medellín, Antioquia, Colombia

**Telegrams: Gobernador de Antioquia, Medellín, Colombia**

**Fax: + 574 381 1521 / 381 1342 / 262 2926**

**Salutation: Sr. Gobernador / Dear Governor**

**COPIES TO:**

Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace

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.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 September 2001.