

# URGENT ACTION

## PARAMILITARIES THREATEN PEACE COMMUNITY

**Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in northern Colombia have received death threats from paramilitaries. The Colombian armed forces have acknowledged the presence of paramilitaries but failed to protect the civilian population.**

On 28 June two members of the Peace Community's Internal Council were followed by 50 paramilitaries carrying weapons whose use is restricted to the armed forces, as they made their way to the neighbouring hamlet of El Porvenir, Antioquia Department. The paramilitaries, who said they were "Gaitanista Forces of Colombia" (*Fuerzas Gaitanistas de Colombia*, AGC) threatened to kill peasant farmer **Fabio Graciano**. He had also been threatened with death on 20 June when paramilitaries occupied his family's farm in El Porvenir, next to the Peace Community. His brother **Oscar Mario Graciano** was threatened with death on 11 May.

On 28 June a paramilitary stayed close to the home of a peasant farmer family in the hamlet of La Esperanza, which is part of the Peace Community, saying that he was "lost" (*extraviado*). When he was told he should ask the armed forces who were 15 minutes away, he said he did not have permission to approach his employers. The previous day, a member of the Veléz Battalion of the XVII Brigade, some of whose members are apparently implicated in the massacre of eight members of the Peace Community on 21 February 2005, acknowledged that several hamlets of the Peace Community were under control of the paramilitary Gaitanista Forces of Colombia, while others were controlled by guerrilla forces. Over the past few months paramilitaries and members of the armed forces have been seen repeatedly in the area. On 18 June the Peace Community estimated that there were about 400 paramilitaries between the hamlets of El Porvenir and La Esperanza, 100 of them on the land of the Peace Community.

**Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Express concern for the safety of Fabio Graciano, other peasant farmers and members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó whom paramilitaries have threatened to kill;
- Urge the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into these death threats and the massive presence of paramilitaries, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Remind them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, have the right not to be drawn into the armed conflict;
- Urge them to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 AUGUST 2012 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 Juan Carlos Pinzón  
 Ministerio de Defensa  
 Carrera 54, no.26-29  
 Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: +57 1 266 1003**

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

**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.



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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 and villages in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who maintain their right not to 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, they 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 set up, on 23 March 1997, more than 170 of its members or other civilians living in the area 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 operate 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 who are close to them or living in the area, have also been killed. Many of the killings have coincided with periods of intense threats against the Peace Community and appear to have been part of attempts to intimidate its members.

Civilians who maintain their right not to be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict are met with suspicion and hostility from the army, the paramilitaries and guerrilla groups.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, but it is clear from the killing of human rights defenders, and the threats against them and other vulnerable sectors of civilian society in different parts of the country, that they are still operating.

Name: Fabio Graciano, Oscar Mario Graciano; the members of the Peace Community

Gender m/f: both male; male and female