

URGENT ACTION

ARMED FORCES THREATEN PEACE COMMUNITY

Members of the armed forces have threatened to “exterminate” the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in north-western Colombia.

On 21 July a member of the armed forces told an inhabitant of San José, Antioquia Department, who has close links with the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó that “the time has arrived for that son-of-a-bitch community, we are coordinating with the paramilitaries for the extermination of that son-of-a-bitch Peace Community” (*esa HP de Comunidad de Paz, le llego la hora, estamos coordinando con los paras el exterminio de esa HP Comunidad de Paz*). On 19 July a local newspaper ran an article with statements from the new commander of the XVII Brigade, a former commander of the Voltígeros Battalion, which regularly operates in the area. The XVII Brigade has a grave human rights record and the units attached to it, including the Voltígeros Battalion, have repeatedly colluded with paramilitary forces in the area. The commander said that the Brigade would do special work with the hamlets of San José de Apartadó to recuperate the space they had lost, alluding to the areas which make up the Peace Community. The Peace Community understands this as a further threat to exterminate them.

In recent weeks paramilitaries have forced people living in the area of San José to attend meetings in the hamlet of Rodoxali. Paramilitaries continue to operate from the bases they have established in the vicinity of the hamlets of the Peace Community.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the safety of the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area;
- Urging the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the threats by members of the army and the threats and presence of paramilitaries, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and other civilians living in the area, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict;
- Urging 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 4 SEPTEMBER 2014 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.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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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 in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who maintain their right to not 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, the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó 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 established on 23 March 1997, more than 200 of its members 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 have links to them or live in the area, have also been killed.

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 began demobilizing in 2005 under the Justice and Peace Law, 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. Under the Justice and Peace Law they received a maximum of eight years in prison in return for confessing their responsibility in human rights violations and handing over stolen assets, including land, to their rightful owners. However, since the start of the process only 22 paramilitaries have been convicted of human rights violations. This year at least 160 paramilitaries will be eligible for conditional release because they have served the maximum eight years stipulated under the law. The legal processes against the vast majority of those who will apply for conditional release have not been concluded. There is concern that effective measures are not being put in place to ensure that these paramilitaries do not pose a threat to their victims and others in the communities to which they return.

Name: members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area
Gender m/f: both

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