

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003 Estimado Sr. Juan Carlos Pinzon Defense Minister of Colombia
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July 16, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We urge you to take immediate action to address the immediate danger posed to **Fabiano Graciano, Oscar Mario Graciano**, and other residents of the **Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó** who have received death threats from paramilitaries. The international community calls on you to protect the Peace Community and civilians from paramilitary violence. The residents of the Peace Community, comprised of hundreds of families living in more than 20 hamlets outside Apartadó municipality in Antioquia Department, assert their right of non-involvement in Colombia's armed conflict. The Peace Community refuses to bear arms or assist armed groups and demands that paramilitaries leave their communities and respect their commitment to non-involvement.

Since the Peace Community's founding in March 1997, more than 170 of its members (or other civilians living in the area) have been killed or disappeared, and others have been threatened or sexually assaulted. In this environment, the Peace Community lives in constant danger. Paramilitary groups, operating with the support of the armed forces, are responsible for the majority of these murders. Other civilians in the area have also been murdered in large numbers during times of paramilitary threats and intimidation to the Peace Community.

On June 27, a member of the Velez Battalion of the XVII Brigade (implicated in the massacre of eight members of the same Peace Community in 2005) admitted that Gaitanista paramilitaries (Fuerzas Gaitanistas de Colombia, or AGC), control several hamlets of the Peace Community. On June 28, fifty armed paramilitaries, self-identified as AGC, followed members of the Community's Internal Council in El Porvernir. They threatened to kill peasant farmer **Fabio Graciano**; they had previously threatened him on June 20 and his brother **Oscar Mario Graciano** on May 11. The area is becoming increasingly occupied and militarized by armed groups.

Since 2002, we have faxed at least 20 letters to Colombian government officials regarding intimidation, harassment, threats and assassinations of residents of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. Because we are deeply concerned for the safety of Fabiano Graciano, Oscar Mario Graciano and all residents of the Peace Community, **we strongly urge that you:**

- fully and impartially investigate these death threats and the massive presence of paramilitaries, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice;
- remember and respect the rights of civilians, including the San Jose Apartadó Peace Community, not to be drawn into armed conflict; and
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their ties to security forces, in accordance with stated government commitments and UN recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

Copies: Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 194/12 Colombia

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: