

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
President of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003

Sr. Ministro Juan Carlos Pinzón
Minister of Defense of Colombia

March 1, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely disturbed at the new threat to the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** in Antioquia Department. On February 23 a man called a member of the Community and told him that a new massacre of the Peace Community was planned, that the leaders of the Peace Community were the target and that they should not let the children into the streets.

Witnesses reported that between February 11 and 16 several trucks transported paramilitaries from the neighboring department of Chocó to three paramilitary bases in the vicinity of Piedras Blancas in Carepa Municipality, Nueva Antioquia in Turbo Municipality, and a base on the road to Zunguito. These locations are hamlets of the Peace Community. The trucks drove, without being stopped, through areas that have constant military and police roadblocks. Paramilitaries have been able to maintain a strong presence in the San José de Apartadó area despite the fact that it is heavily militarized.

The threats come after a decision of an administrative tribunal on February 8 that recognizes the Peace Community. It found that the State must apologize to the members of the Community for its part in the February 2005 massacre in which eight people, including four children, were killed and their bodies mutilated in a joint army-paramilitary operation. No high-ranking officials of the armed forces have as yet been convicted for these crimes, although a number of paramilitaries and army soldiers were convicted for their role in the 2005 killings. One army officer, Capitan Guillermo Gordillo pled guilty and in March 2010 was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

We have written more than 20 letters to Colombian officials since 2002 about the human rights violations of the people of the San José Peace Community. Since the Peace Community's establishment in March 1997, more than 170 of its members and other civilians living in the area have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance, while others have been threatened or sexually assaulted. Amnesty International has repeatedly denounced the presence of a paramilitary base in Nueva Antioquia. Despite this, authorities have failed to take decisive action to confront the paramilitary presence in the area.

We **strongly urge** that you

- order full and impartial investigations into the threat described above and the increased presence of paramilitaries, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Peace Community of San José de Apartadó ~via US mail
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: 202.647.2628
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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