

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/012/2009
25 March 2009

UA 81/09 Fear for safety/Death threats

COLOMBIA **Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in the municipality of Apartadó, Antioquia Department**

Members of the Colombian armed forces and paramilitaries are continuing to threaten the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó.

A 15-year-old female member of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community was the victim of an attempted rape on 14 March, reportedly by members of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian army. The attack happened in a hamlet belonging to the Peace Community, which is located in the north-western Department of Antioquia. She fought off the soldiers and called for help. As the attack took place, another member of the Peace community who was with her at the time, was taken to one side and had a machete put to his cheek. The soldiers threatened to skin him alive and gouge out his eyes. They also accused him of being a guerrilla and said that they were going to kill him.

After failing in their attempt to rape the girl, the members of the XVII Brigade threatened to kill her. After half an hour, both members of the Peace Community were released and warned that if they told anyone what had happened, they would have to suffer the consequences.

There are reports that from 7-13 March members of the army entered La Resbalosa, another of the Peace Community hamlets, and destroyed the community's crops and stole food from the inhabitants' homes. They accused various members of the community of being guerrillas and told them that they were going to destroy the Peace Community.

On 9 and 10 March, pamphlets, signed by paramilitaries, were distributed in the municipal capital of Apartadó and in San José de Apartadó. The pamphlets stated that the paramilitaries were carrying out a 'social cleansing' and included a list of people who had been ordered to leave the area or be killed.

From 1-3 March, armed paramilitaries dressed in military fatigues and with armbands identifying them as being from the paramilitary umbrella organization, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* AUC), set up road blocks on the route leading out of Nuevo Antioquia in the neighbouring municipality of Turbó towards La Esperanza, one of the Peace Community's hamlets. Reports suggest that over 100 paramilitaries are in the Nuevo Antioquia area. In the past Amnesty International has received repeated reports of a paramilitary presence in this area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created by local civilians in March 1997 in an effort to persuade the parties to the conflict – the security forces, paramilitaries, and guerrilla groups – to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict. The Peace Community has always insisted that combatants keep off their land. The security forces and paramilitary groups have responded by accusing the community of subversion. The guerrilla group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, have in turn accused the community of cooperating with their enemies. Since the community proclaimed itself a Peace Community, its members have continued to be attacked or killed, mostly by paramilitaries and the security forces, but also by guerrilla

groups. Since 1997, more than 170 community members have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States has called on the Colombian authorities to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community, most recently in a Resolution of 15 March 2005. However, the Colombian authorities appear to have taken little action to implement the Court's requests.

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

- calling on the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the attempted rape of a 15-year-old member of the Peace community, allegedly by members of the armed forces, and the attacks against other members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern for the safety of inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, following death threats against them;
- expressing concern that the members of the Peace Community are in danger, and calling on the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee their safety, as deemed appropriate by the community themselves, in line with the Resolution issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States on 15 March 2005;
- calling on the authorities to take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region and to break their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

Vice-President

Dr. Francisco Santos Calderón

Vicepresidencia, Carrera 8A No 7-27, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 565 7682 (ask: "me da tono de fax por favor")

Salutation: Dear Vice-president Santos/Estimado Sr. Vicepresidente Santos

Minister of Defence

Dr. Juan Manuel Santos

Avenida El Dorado, Carrera 52 OFI. 217, Centro Administrativo Nacional (CAN), Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 266 1003 (ask "me da tono de fax, por favor")

Salutation: Dear Dr Santos/Estimado Dr. Santos

Attorney General

Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Arana

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación

Diagonal 22B (Av. Luis Carlos Galán No. 52-01) Bloque C, Piso 4, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: +57 1 570 2000 (a message in Spanish will ask you to enter extension 2017)

Salutation: Dear Mr Iguarán/Estimado Sr. Fiscal

COPIES TO:

Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó

AA 243 de Apartadó

Antioquia, 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 6 May 2009.