

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/003/2007

7 February 2007

Further information on UA 48/05 (AMR 23/003/2005, 28 February 2005) and follow ups (AMR 23/043/2005, 16 December 2005; AMR 23/010/2006, 13 March 2006; AMR 23/011/2006, 16 March 2006; AMR 23/042/2006, 4 October 2006) Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA **Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**

Fears for the safety of inhabitants of the *Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó*, Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, have been heightened by fresh threats against the civilian community by army-backed paramilitaries.

A number of witnesses living in the San José de Apartadó area, in the municipality of Apartadó in Antioquia Department, reported that on 15 January 2007 they had been approached by a group of 10 armed men who identified themselves as paramilitaries belonging to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC), United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia. The paramilitaries demanded information about the Peace Community, its leaders and individuals working with the Peace Community, and reportedly told the witnesses that they were setting up a special group to attack the community.

Amnesty International has reported, and continues to receive information to the effect, that paramilitary forces continue to operate in Antioquia Department, despite having supposedly demobilized as part of a government-sponsored process. On 4 October 2006, Amnesty International reported that armed paramilitaries had threatened to kill the leaders of the Peace Community (see previous UA update). The reports of fresh threats suggest that the Colombian authorities have failed to take decisive action to safeguard the Peace Community. It appears that paramilitaries continue to maintain a presence in the region despite heavy permanent army and police presence in the area.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created by civilians living in the San José de Apartadó area of the municipality of Apartadó in March 1997, in an effort to persuade both the armed forces and guerrillas to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running conflict. The Peace Community has always insisted that combatants remain outside its areas of habitation and agriculture. As a result the security forces and their paramilitary allies have accused 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 Peace Community was created, over 160 of its members have been killed or have "disappeared"; the vast majority at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies, the remainder at the hands of the FARC.

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 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:

- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, following reports that paramilitaries are threatening a fresh attack;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into reported paramilitary threats against members of the Peace Community, for the results to be made public, and for those responsible to be brought to justice;

- expressing concern that the lives of members of the Peace Community are at risk, and calling on the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety of the community, 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:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-2, Bogotá, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 337 5890 / 342 0592

Salutation: Dear President Uribe/ Excmo. Sr. Presidente Uribe

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Dr. Carlos Holguín Sardi

Ministro del Interior y Justicia

Ministerio Del Interior Y De Justicia, Carrera 9a. No. 14-10, Bogotá D.C. Colombia

Salutation: Sr. Ministro / Dear Sir

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 1 414 9108

Salutation: Estimado Sr. Fiscal / Dear Mr Iguarán

COPIES TO:

Human Rights Ombudsman

Sr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 oficina 301, Bogotá, 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 21 March 2007.