

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 23/004/2007 (Public)  
News Service No: 040  
27 February 2007

### **Colombia: Amnesty International welcomes apparent advances in the investigations into the 2005 San José de Apartadó massacre**

Amnesty International welcomes news that Colombia's Office of the Attorney General is investigating 69 army soldiers for the killing on 21 February 2005 of eight members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, including Peace Community leader Luis Eduardo Guerra, two children aged 11 and 6, and an 18 month-old infant.

The soldiers under investigation reportedly belong to the Alacrán Company of the Counter-Guerrilla Battalion No. 33 of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian army. The massacre reportedly occurred in the context of a large military operation in the area.

Amnesty International said that in light of the fact that over 160 members of the Peace Community have been killed or "disappeared" with impunity in the last 10 years, the news that members of the army are being investigated for the 2005 killings could represent an important step forward in seeking redress for at least some of the victims.

As repeatedly requested by the Peace Community itself, the Colombian government must create the conditions necessary to ensure a full and impartial criminal investigation into this massacre and the other killings and "disappearances" of members of the Peace Community, including measures to protect, for example, witnesses and prosecutors, so they can participate and testify without fear of reprisals

#### **Background Information**

Over 160 Peace Community members have been killed in San José de Apartadó, municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia, since 1997. The Peace Community was created in March 1997 as an attempt by inhabitants in San José de Apartadó to ensure that their right as civilians not to be drawn into the conflict be respected. This has led to accusations by the security forces and the guerrilla that the members of the Peace Community are siding with their enemies, which has led to serious human rights abuses committed against them by both sides in the conflict. The vast majority of the killings have been committed by the security forces and army-backed paramilitary forces, and the remainder by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group.

