

PUBLIC

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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; AMR 23/003/2007, 7 February 2007; AMR 23/010/2007, 16 May 2007)
– Fear for safety

COLOMBIA **Members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (Antioquia Department)**

Killed: **Dairo Torres (m), community leader**

The recent killing of Dairo Torres, a leader of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community in Apartadó Municipality, Antioquia Department, heightens Amnesty International's concerns for the safety of members of the Peace Community.

At midday on 13 July, Dairo Torres was on a bus travelling between the municipal capital of Apartadó and San José de Apartadó. Five minutes into his journey, the bus was reportedly forced to stop by two armed members of an army-backed paramilitary group, who boarded the vehicle, forced Dairo Torres to get off, and ordered the bus driver to carry on. Hours later, people travelling on the next bus along the route discovered the body of Dairo Torres at the side of the road. He had been shot.

The killing of Dairo Torres took place just two minutes' drive away from the police checkpoint in El Mangolo, the last neighbourhood on the outskirts of Apartadó on the road to San José de Apartadó. Some reports also indicate that on the morning of 13 July, the two paramilitaries were seen talking to police officers at this check point. Over the past 10 years, paramilitaries have operated, and continue to operate, in this area and along the road to San José de Apartadó unhindered, despite a heavy military presence in the area, and despite their supposed demobilization in a nationwide government-sponsored process.

Reports also indicate that on 12 July the two paramilitaries, dressed in civilian clothes and armed with handguns, forced a bus to stop in the same area. They reportedly boarded the bus and introduced themselves as members of the paramilitary group *Águilas Negras* (Black Eagles) and told passengers that they were in control of the area. They reportedly searched the vehicle and said to the passengers: "Those sons of bitches from the Peace Community will pay a heavy price" (*que esa hija de puta Comunidad de Paz iba a comenzar a pagar bien caro*). This incident was reported to the authorities, who apparently took no action. In fact, the same paramilitaries were reportedly seen in the area again on 15 and 16 July. Between 11 and 15 July other paramilitaries reportedly told people living around Apartadó that they were going to "finish off" the Peace Community (*"acabar con esa hija de puta comunidad"*).

The killing took place shortly after an attack by guerrilla forces belonging to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) against police units operating in the area on 9 July, in which, according to reports, one police officer was killed and another two were injured.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created by civilians 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 homes and farmland. As a result the security forces and their paramilitary allies have accused the community of subversion and labelled its leaders, including Dairo Torres, as guerrillas. The guerrilla group has in turn accused the community of cooperating with its enemies. Since the Peace Community was

created, over 160 of its members have been killed or have been the victims of enforced disappearances, 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 the inhabitants of the Peace Community, but the authorities appear to have taken little action to implement the Court's requests.

Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups have supposedly demobilized in a government-sponsored process. Despite this, Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating with the cooperation of the security forces. This includes repeated paramilitary threats against San José de Apartadó. It appears that many paramilitary groups have not demobilized at all, but are continuing to operate, often using new names, in an attempt to cover up the fact that they have not actually demobilized. Recent public statements by paramilitary organizations have made clear that their command structures remain intact.

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 the 13 July killing of Dairo Torres, and recent reports that paramilitaries are threatening to attack the Peace Community;
- calling for full and impartial investigations into the killing of Dairo Torres, and into the 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;
- calling on the authorities to take all measures necessary to guarantee the safety of the Peace Community, whose lives are in danger, as deemed appropriate by the community themselves;
- 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

Fax: +57 1 560 46 30

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

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 30 August 2007.