

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 23/020/2003

21 February 2003

UA 50/03      Fear for Safety

COLOMBIA      **Wilson David Higuita (m) ]**  
**Gildardo Tuberquia (m) ] community leaders**  
**Other members of the Peace Community of Paz San José de Apartadó, Antioquia**  
**department**

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Two members of the *Consejo Interno*, Internal Council, of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, in the municipality of Apartadó, department of Antioquia, were amongst several people recently detained by the Colombian army. During their detention, the two men were reportedly accused of being guerrilla collaborators.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of the two men and other inhabitants of the community, as in the past such accusations have frequently been followed by serious human rights violations committed by army-backed paramilitaries.

Gildardo Tuberquia and Wilson David Higuita were reportedly returning by bus to the community of San José de Apartadó, at around 4pm on 12 February. The bus was forced to stop at a Colombian army checkpoint in the community of Caracolí, a few minutes' drive from San José de Apartadó.

The bus was allegedly searched and the soldiers, belonging to the *Brigada XVII*, XVII Brigade of the Colombian army claimed they had found a box of explosives on board. All eight passengers on the bus were reportedly held at the checkpoint for several hours. According to witnesses at the checkpoint, the two men were being questioned about their role as community leaders.

It is reported that Wilson David Higuita and Gildardo Tuberquia were taken to the XVII Brigade base in the neighbouring municipality of Carepa, where they were held for several hours. Whilst they were held at the base they were reportedly insulted, threatened and labelled guerrilla collaborators. They were then handed over to the *Fiscalía*, Office of the Attorney General in Apartadó. The two men were finally released at 9pm on 15 February. Amnesty International fears that the accusations made against them, together with recent press reports accusing those captured of being guerrillas, could lead to further threats, harassments, "disappearances" and killings by security forces and their army-backed paramilitaries.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was created in 1997 in an effort by the civilian population to call on warring factions to respect their right as civilians not to be drawn into Colombia's long-running conflict. Both the security forces and their paramilitary allies on the one hand and *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, (FARC), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia guerrilla forces on the other have accused the members of the community of cooperating with their enemies. These accusations have been followed by repeated death threats against members of the Peace Community and the killing and "disappearance" of over 70 members of the Peace Community, the vast majority committed by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. The security forces have continually threatened the Peace Community with paramilitary incursions and threatened to end the Peace Community model. Amnesty International has expressed its concerns for the safety of the community in external documents (see AMR 23/23/00), press releases (AMR 23/047/2002) and Urgent Actions (see UA 98/02, AMR 23/034/02, 2 April 2002 and its updates AMR 23/043/02, 23 April 2002 and AMR 23/051/02, 9 May 2002).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Wilson David Higueta, Gildardo Tuberquia and members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, after they were detained and reportedly labelled guerrilla collaborators following their detention by the army on 12 February;
- expressing concern for the safety of the inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, insisting that all measures deemed appropriate by the members of the community themselves are taken to guarantee their safety;
- expressing concern that the Colombian authorities should continue to respect the right of the civilian population not to be drawn into the conflict and so respect the right of San José de Apartadó not to be militarized.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez

Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 No.7-26

Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Presidente de la República, Bogotá, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 342 0592**

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

Minister of the Interior and Justice

Sr. Fernando Londoño Hoyos,

Ministero del Interior y de Justicia

Ministerio del Interior

Palacio Echeverry, Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o.

Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

**Telegram: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia**

**Fax: + 57 1 566 4573**

**Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro**

Attorney General

Dr. Luis Camilo Osorio,

Fiscal General de la Nación, Fiscalía General de la Nación,

Diagonal 22B 52-01 (Ciudad Salite),

Bogotá, Colombia

**Fax: + 57 1 570 2022 / 2017 (if someone answers say "me da tono de fax por favor")**

**Salutation: Dear Dr. Osorio / Estimado Dr. Osorio**

**COPIES TO:**

National Advocate for the people

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes Muñoz, Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo,

Calle 55, No. 10-32/46 office 301,

Santafé de 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 4 April 2003.