

via fax: 011 571 596 0631 <b>Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 <b>Sr. Fiscal General Eduardo Montealegre</b> Attorney General of Colombia
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February 1, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the recent incursion of paramilitaries into the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in Antioquia Department. They are entering communities, going to specific homes, and threatening to kill residents of the Peace Community if they refuse to collaborate with the paramilitaries.

January 15: dozens of heavily-armed men who identified themselves as members of the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC) entered the hamlets of La Unión, Buenos Aires, and Arenas Altas. In La Unión, a group of paramilitaries threatened to kill two members of the Peace Community if the residents refused to collaborate with them.

January 16: a group of armed paramilitaries entered the hamlet of Claras, rounded up a number of residents, and told them they had to collaborate with the paramilitaries.

January 17: paramilitaries visited the home of some members of the Peace Community in Arenas Altas and told them that if the community did not keep quiet they would kill its leaders. In the hamlet of Esperanza, residents saw paramilitaries arrive at the home of **Reinaldo Areiza** and heard them say they were “after his head.” Fortunately, Reinaldo Areiza was not at home.

January 19: paramilitaries who entered the hamlet of Resbalosa told the residents they had “control over all the hamlets...that they had the green light to eliminate that son-of-a-bitch community if it didn’t submit to them.” That same day, residents in the hamlets of La Hoz and Rodoxalí reported the presence of paramilitaries.

January 20: five paramilitaries again visited the home of Reinaldo Areiza. He was not at home.

Located approximately 12 km from the city of Apartadó in the Urabá region of Antioquia Department, the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is a village comprised of 28 hamlets, with a population of nearly 3,000. The residents declared themselves a “Peace Community” in March 1997, insisting that ALL armed actors—guerrillas, army and paramilitaries—stay out. Colombian authorities have done little to protect the community, despite a March 15, 2005 resolution by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights calling on them to do so. During these incursions in recent months (cf our letters of Sept 24 and Oct 24 2016), some of the paramilitaries have been seen fraternizing with members of the security forces stationed in the area.

Since 2002 we have written thirty letters to Colombian officials about the human rights violations of the people of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. We believe that the continued presence and threats from paramilitaries in this Community places members of the Community and other local inhabitants at increasing risk. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 Andy O’Neal, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email onealRA@state.gov  
 John Brandt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email  
 José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650  
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA236/16Update\_Colombia

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**