

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890/342 0592 Sr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez Presidente de la República de Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario Germán Iguarán Attorney General
via fax: 011 57 1 562 7822 Dra. Maria Consuelo Araújo Minister of Foreign Relations	Via US mail: Sr. Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz Human Rights Ombudsman

October 13, 2006

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We continue to be extremely concerned about the safety of the **inhabitants of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**, Antioquia Department. On September 25, a group of 30-40 armed men, identifying themselves as members of the army-backed paramilitary group United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC), entered a home near San Josecito, a camp set up by members of the Peace Community in 2005. The paramilitaries produced a list of names saying that they intended to kill various Peace Community leaders and their aides. The gunmen demanded to know whether the "*gringos*" were – a reference to international human rights workers accompanying the Peace Community. They said that they would eventually clean up the "guerrilla zone." They then left, threatening to kill anyone that spoke about the visit.

We are very concerned that a large number of paramilitaries were able to enter the area around San Josecito, a short distance from the village of San José de Apartadó, where there is a permanent army and police presence and where paramilitary forces operating in the region are supposed to have been demobilized in recent years.

We have written to Colombian officials previously expressing our deep concern for the safety of this Peace Community because of the serious human rights violations committed against them by the security forces or their paramilitary allies (letters Nov 22 2002, Feb 23 2003, Aug 12 2003, Nov 27 2003, Feb 26 2004, Oct 12 2004, Mar 3 2005, Apr 12 2005, May 26 2005, Jun 14 2005, Apr 13 2006).

Because of these current threats and the history of attacks against the Peace Community, **we strongly urge you to**

- Conduct full and impartial investigations into paramilitary threats against members of the Peace Community, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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 March 15, 2005;
- Respect the right of the civilian population, including the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, not to be drawn into the long-running conflict in Colombia;
- Conduct a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in Antioquia, make the results public, and bring to justice those found responsible for supporting and participating in such groups.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Carolina Barco Iskson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax  
 William B Wood US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax  
 Heather Merritt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax  
 Paolo Carozza US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights~ via fax  
 US Senators DeWine & Voinovich ~ via email  
 US Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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