

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890 / 011 57 1 342 0592 Señor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez President of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 560 46 30 Doctor Carlos Holguin Sardi Minister of the Interior and Justice of Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia	

June 11, 2007

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply distressed over an assassination and recent threats by paramilitaries and Colombian soldiers to members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. On May 14, paramilitaries shot and killed peasant farmer leader **Francisco Puerta**, from the nearby hamlet of Miramar. Two gunmen approached Puerta at the bus station in Apartadó and demanded his identity papers. They said "This son of a bitch is from that son of a bitch community" and shot him. Nearby police officers let them escape.

Recent threats to community members include:

April 9: soldiers approached two residents, demanding to locate a particular woman, threatening to kill her.

May 9: Black Eagles paramilitaries stopped three women at a paramilitary checkpoint, checked their identity papers and let them go when their names did not match the names they were looking for. The paramilitaries told the women they would be killed if they told anyone what had happened.

May 13: a businessman from Apartadó said that paramilitaries had been overheard discussing a plan to attack the Peace Community by killing community leaders and scaring others into fleeing.

The Peace Community has always insisted that all armed actors stay out of their area since it was created in March 1997. Nevertheless, over 160 of its members have been killed or "disappeared," the vast majority by security forces and their paramilitary allies, the remainder by the FARC. 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. And despite the supposed demobilization of Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups, continued human rights abuses and recent public statements by paramilitary organizations have made clear that their command structures remain intact.

In eleven previous letters (November 2002-February 2007) we have advised you that we (and the world) are aware of the brutal and lethal persecutions suffered by the people of the Peace Community and of your government's strange absence of determination to end them. This is our twelfth letter urging Colombian authorities to protect the Peace Community.

We urgently call upon your humanity and integrity to take the following actions:

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Francisco Puerta, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all measures deemed appropriate by Peace Community residents to guarantee their safety;
- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the reported paramilitary threats against Peace Community members, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take decisive action to confront and dismantle paramilitary groups and their links with the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations and your own government's promise to do so.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

copies: Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax
 William B. Word, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax
 Heather Merrit, Colombia Desk at the US State Department ~ via fax
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Comisión on Human Rights ~ via fax
 Sr. Volmar Antonio Perez Ortiz, Human Rights Ombudsman ~ via fax
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich and U.S. Representatives Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Sutton, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

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