

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, Colombia
via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 Dr. Mario German Iguaran Arana Attorney General of Colombia	

August 1, 2007

We are deeply distressed over the killing by army-backed paramilitaries of **Dairo Torres**, a leader of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** in Antioquia Department. At midday on July 13, Dairo Torres was on a bus traveling between the municipal capital of Apartadó and San José de Apartadó when, five minutes into his journey, two armed members of an army-backed paramilitary group forced the bus to stop, boarded it, forced Dairo Torres to get off, and ordered the bus driver to continue on. Hours later, people traveling on the next bus along the route discovered the dead body of Dairo Torres at the side of the road where he had been shot.

The same morning, the two paramilitaries were seen talking to police officers at a police checkpoint in El Mangolo on the outskirts of Apartadó, just a two-minute drive from where Dairo Torres was killed. On July 12, the two paramilitaries, dressed in civilian clothes and armed with handguns, forced a bus to stop in the same area. They boarded the bus, introduced themselves as members of the paramilitary group *Aguilas Negras* (Black Eagles) and told passengers that they were in control of the area. They searched the vehicle and told passengers that the people from the Peace Community will pay a heavy price. This incident was reported to the authorities, but no action was taken. The same paramilitaries were seen in the area again on July 15 and 16. Between July 11 and 15, other paramilitaries told people living around Apartadó that they were going to "finish off" the Peace Community. Over the past 10 years, paramilitaries have operated unhindered in this area and along the road to San José de Apartadó, despite a heavy military presence in the area and despite the supposed demobilization of paramilitaries in a nationwide government-sponsored process. These events heighten our concerns for the safety of **all** members of this Peace Community.

Since the Peace Community was created in March 1997, over 160 of its members have been killed or have "disappeared," the vast majority at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies, the remainder at the hands of the FARC. In nine previous letters (November 2002-May 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 **tenth** letter.

Because of our concern over the death of **Dairo Torres** and for the safety of the inhabitants of the **Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó**, we again urgently call upon your humanity and integrity to take the following actions:

- conduct a full and impartial investigation into the killing of Dairo Torres, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all measures deemed appropriate by Peace Community residents to guarantee their safety, in line with the Resolution of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights of the Organization of American States on March 15, 2005;
- conduct full and impartial investigations into the paramilitary threats against members of the Peace Community, make the results public, and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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 and your own government's promise.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

cc: Volmar Antonio Pérez Ortiz, Defensor del Pueblo/Human Rights Ombudsman ~ via fax
 Ambassador Carolina Barco Isakson, Embassy of Colombia in the US ~ via fax
 Ambassador William B Wood, US Embassy in 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, Organization of American States ~ via fax
 U.S. Senators Brown and Voinovich ~ via email
 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: