

via fax 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Señor Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003 Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón Minister of Defense of Colombia
--	--

February 26, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about an explosive device that went off on February 5 near the police station in the urban area of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**, located approximately 12 km from the city of Apartadó, Antioquia Department. The impact of the device, planted by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), was felt in the neighboring buildings and caused damage to a house belonging to the Peace Community. Because of the explosion's impact, classes were suspended in a nearby school.

On the same day, soldiers of the XVII Brigade of the Colombian Army told peasant farmers "what happened here will be paid dearly by the inhabitants of San José through paramilitary actions in Apartadó and in Tierra Amarilla, no one should forget that we work together." The same group of soldiers also told a member of the Peace Community that they were going to "finish off" the Peace Community. On February 8, soldiers of the XVII Brigade released **Wber Areiza**, a member of the Peace Community, after detaining him twice. There have been repeated reports of paramilitary presence in the area despite the presence of the armed forces.

This is the twenty-fifth letter we have written to Colombian officials since 2002 about the human rights violations of the people of the San José Peace Community. Since the Peace Community's establishment in March 1997, more than 200 of its members and other civilians living in the area have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance. Guerrilla forces have killed some Peace Community members, but the majority of assassinations and massacres have been committed by paramilitaries, who operate with the support and acquiescence of the Colombian armed forces in the area.

Because we continue to be concerned for the safety of the members of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** and other civilians living in the area, we **strongly urge** that you

- order full and impartial investigations into the explosion described above, the threats by members of the army, threats and presence of paramilitaries, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- respect the rights of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and other civilians living in the area, not be drawn into the armed conflict; and
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with the security forces, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Peace Community of San José de Apartadó ~ via US mail
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 José de Jesus Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 27/14_Colombia

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