

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

**Exmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos**  
President of Colombia

via fax 011 57 1 266 1003

**Sr. Ministro Luis Carlos Villegas**  
Minister of Defense of Colombia

October 14, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply troubled to learn that on September 21 paramilitaries killed **Ernesto Guzmán** in the hamlet of Mulatos, Apartadó Municipality, Antioquia Department. Although he was not a member of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**, he used to sell them produce and some of his relatives were members of the Peace Community.

On September 21 several armed men came to the place where Ernesto Guzmán lived. They shot him and attacked him with a machete. He died as a result of his injuries. According to the Peace Community, paramilitaries have a constant presence in that hamlet and own property next to Ernesto Guzmán's property. About three months ago paramilitaries had urged him to sell his property to them.

On September 11 the same group of paramilitaries, wearing military style fatigues and carrying arms, stopped peasant farmers from Mulatos who had traveled to the hamlet of Playa Larga to use the threshing machine from that hamlet for their rice. The paramilitaries accused the peasant farmers of Mulatos and La Resbalosa of being guerrilla fighters and told them they were not allowed to pass through Playa Larga. In the past, those persons labeled guerrilla fighters have subsequently been threatened or killed. The presence of paramilitaries in the area persists, despite the heavy presence of the security forces and warnings by Amnesty International and other non-governmental organizations, as well as the Peace Community, who have repeatedly denounced the presence of paramilitaries in the area.

This is the twenty-sixth 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. 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.

Because of our continuing concern 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 killing of Ernesto Guzmán, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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

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  
Andy O'Neal, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email [onealRA@state.gov](mailto:onealRA@state.gov)  
John Brandt, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email  
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, 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

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