

via fax: 011 571 596 0631
Excmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 571 266 1003
Sr. Luis Carlos Villegas
Minister of Defense of Colombia

February 13, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged about escalating incursions by paramilitaries in hamlets in or near the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó in Antioquia Department and death threats to Community residents. International observers have witnessed paramilitaries wearing military fatigues, hoods, and armbands of the paramilitary Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC). In addition to the incidents reported in our letter of February 1, the following have occurred:

January 22: in the hamlet of La Esperanza, paramilitaries visited the home of **Reinaldo Areiza** for a third time; he was not there. Paramilitaries repeated threats that those who do not collaborate with them would have to leave or be killed. They stated that they are in control of the region with the authorization of the security forces. Paramilitaries held a local family captive in their home for several hours and showed them a death list of individuals, which included members of the Peace Community.

January 23: a paramilitary raped a 14-year-old girl at her home in the hamlet of La Hoz and threatened to kill her if she reported the rape.

January 27: paramilitaries threatened **Diana Guisao** at her home in Mulato Medio and showed her a death list, which included members of the Peace Community. Paramilitaries also entered the “peace village” in the hamlet of Mulatos, which commemorates the 2005 massacre of eight Peace Community members. They photographed local residents and announced they would “kill all snitches.”

January 28: in La Esperanza, five paramilitaries entered a communally-owned property and held two Peace Community members captive for several minutes.

January 31: paramilitaries frequenting the hamlets of Mulatos and Resbalosa entered the homes of several families and stole clothing, chickens and other food supplies.

February 1: paramilitaries again entered the “peace village” and threatened to kill members of the Peace Community.

February 2: paramilitaries held two families captive for several minutes and threatened them with death.

In March 2016, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that paramilitary groups (referred to as “post-demobilization groups” in their report) “constantly undermine human rights and citizen security, the administration of justice and peacebuilding, including land restitution. Dismantling the groups that control stolen land through the use or threat of violence represents a permanent challenge to peace.”

We again **strongly urge** that you

- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break their links with government security forces, in line with stated government commitments;
- respect the right of civilians, including the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and other civilians living in the area, not to be drawn into armed conflict.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators

and

Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

copies: Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó ~ via US mail
Juan Carlos Pinzón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email DaleyRS@state.gov
Colombia Desk, US State Department (attention: Ian Arzeni and Gail Morgado) ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and Human Rights Defenders, 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: