

<p>via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia</p>	<p>via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira Attorney General of Colombia</p>
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January 11, 2018

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely disturbed and saddened by the recent violent attack on **members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** in Antioquia Department. Several Community members were injured, including **Germán Graciano Posso**, legal representative of the Peace Community. We are concerned about threats by neo-paramilitaries to attack again soon.

On December 29, 2017 at 10:15am, five armed neo-paramilitary men entered the Peace Community's central building where cacao is bought and sold to local farmers in the region. Several Peace Community members were present, including Germán Graciano, and observers from two international organizations. In their attempts to disarm the men, some Community members were injured, including Germán Graciano, who was wounded in the hand. Unarmed community members succeeded in disarming and detaining two of the five men; the three others escaped.

Just one week prior to this attack, the Peace Community had received information regarding the planned assassination of Germán Graciano, and denounced the threat on their website.


After turning the two attackers over to the custody of the District Attorney's Investigative Technical Body, Community members learned that the two were released from custody shortly after their arrest. It is unclear what actions, if any, the District Attorney's office has taken to investigate this crime. Less than two days after this incident, the Peace Community received another threat; neo-paramilitaries in the San José area have vowed to attack community leaders again soon.

The Governor of Antioquia claims that the assailants were not neo-paramilitaries but members of the Peace Community. He accused the community of "crying wolf." Despite evidence to the contrary, the governor said, "There were no paramilitaries, just a couple of kids..."

More than 200 members of the Peace Community have been murdered since the Peace Community was established in 1997. Because of our serious concern about the recent attack and threats toward Peace Community members which have increased over the past year (cf our letter of December 23 2017), we strongly urge that you

- conduct a thorough and complete investigation into the December 29 attack on the Peace Community, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- provide immediate, effective protection for Germán Graciano Posso and other members of the Peace Community who are being threatened, in strict accordance with their wishes
- acknowledge the grave threat by neo-paramilitary groups in San José de Apartadó and throughout Colombia, and implement an effective plan to dismantle these groups.

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

and


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Camilo Reyes, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643 and email
Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Ryan Reid and Christine Russell, Desk Officers for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email
Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

FOR_1/4/2018_Colombia

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