

COLOMBIA

Threats and attacks continue against the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó; another community leader is murdered

RRN letters 11/22/02, 2/23/03, 8/12/03, 11/27/03, 2/26/04, 10/12/04, 3/3/05, 4/12/05, 6/14/05, 4/13/06, 2/11/07, 6/11/07

We continue to fear for the safety of the civilian inhabitants of the **Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó** (Peace Community of San José de Apartadó) in Antioquia Department. Our fears have been heightened by fresh threats and recent assassination by army-backed paramilitaries.

On May 14, 2007 paramilitaries shot and killed peasant farmer leader Francisco Puerta. Two gunmen approached Puerta at the bus station in Apartadó, the nearest big city, and demanded his identity papers. They said "This son of a bitch is from that son of a bitch community" and shot him. Nearby police officers let the perpetrators escape.



Recent threats to community members include:

April 9: soldiers approached two residents, demanding to locate a particular woman, threatening to kill her.

May 9: Black Eagle paramilitaries stopped three women at a paramilitary checkpoint, checked their identity papers and let them go when their names did not match the names they were looking for. The paramilitaries told the women they would be killed if they told anyone what had happened.

May 13: a businessman from Apartadó said that paramilitaries had been overheard discussing a plan to attack the Peace Community by killing community leaders and scaring

others into fleeing.

Since it was created in March 1997, the Peace Community has always insisted that all armed actors stay out of their town and surrounding hamlets that make up the Peace Community. Nevertheless, **over 160 of its members have been killed or "disappeared"**—the vast majority by security forces and their paramilitary allies, the remainder by the FARC. 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. And despite the supposed demobilization of Colombia's army-backed paramilitary groups, continued human rights abuses and recent public statements by paramilitary organizations have made clear that their command structures remain intact.

In 12 letters (November 2002-June 2007) **RRN members have advised Colombian officials that we are aware of the brutal and lethal persecutions suffered by the people of the Peace Community** and of the Colombian government's strange absence of determination to these attacks.