

URGENT ACTION

ARMED CONFLICT THREATENS PEACE COMMUNITY

Colombia's armed conflict continues to affect members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, as an explosive device reportedly planted by guerrillas went off near a police station and a school, and the armed forces continue to threaten its members.

On 5 February an explosive device went off near the police station in the urban area of San José de Apartadó, Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia. The impact of the device, which reportedly had been planted by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) was felt in the neighbouring buildings, causing damage to a house belonging to the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**. Classes were suspended in a nearby school due to the impact of the explosion.

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." (*lo sucedido aquí lo pagarán caro los pobladores HP de San José a través de acciones de los paramilitares en Apartadó y en Tierra Amarilla; que a nadie se le olvide que nosotros trabajamos juntos*). The same group of soldiers also told a member of the Peace Community that they were going to "finish off" (*acabar*) the Peace Community. On 8 February Wber Areiza, a member of the Peace Community, was temporarily detained twice by soldiers of the XVII Brigade. He has since been released. There have been repeated reports of paramilitary presence in the area, despite the presence of the armed forces.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- ✓ Expressing concern for the safety of the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area;
- ✓ Urging the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the explosion, the threats by members of the army and the threats and presence of paramilitaries, and to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ✓ Reminding them that civilians, including the San José de Apartadó Peace Community and other civilians living in the area, have the right to not be drawn into the armed conflict;
- ✓ Urging them to 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.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 MARCH 2014 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
 Excmo. Sr. Presidente Santos**

Defence Minister

Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón
 Ministerio de Defensa
 Carrera 54, no.26-29
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 266 1003

**Salutation: Dear Minister Pinzón/
 Sr. Ministro Pinzón**

And copies to:

Peace Community
 Comunidad de Paz de
 San José de Apartadó
 AA 243 de Apartadó
 Antioquia, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is made up of people living in a number of hamlets in the municipality of Apartadó, in Antioquia Department, north-western Colombia, who maintain their right to not be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict and refuse to take sides with any of the parties to the conflict. They refuse to bear arms or provide information or logistical support to either side. In return, they demand that the parties to the conflict stay out of their communities and respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with the warring parties.

Since the Peace Community was established on 23 March 1997, more than 200 of its members have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance, while others have been threatened or sexually assaulted. Those in the Peace Community are in constant danger. The majority of those killed lost their lives at the hands of paramilitaries, who operate with the support and acquiescence of members of the armed forces in the area. Guerrilla forces have also killed members of the Peace Community. Over the last decade many civilians who are not members of the Peace Community, but have links to them or live in the area, have also been killed.

Civilians who maintain their right not to be drawn into Colombia's armed conflict are met with suspicion and hostility from the army, the paramilitaries, and guerrilla groups.

Colombia's paramilitary groups supposedly began demobilizing in 2005, but it is clear from the killing of human rights defenders, and the threats against them and other vulnerable sectors of civilian society in different parts of the country, that they are still operating.

Name: members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area
Gender m/f: both

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