

URGENT ACTION

PARAMILITARY ABDUCTION NEAR PEACE COMMUNITY

Colombian soldiers and paramilitaries have threatened members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians in the area. A peasant farmer has been subjected to enforced disappearance and dozens have been forcibly displaced.

Soldiers from the Mobile Brigade 24 of the Colombian army stopped a member of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** on 11 September in the hamlet of La Resbalosa, Apartadó Municipality, Antioquia Department. They threatened him with a gun and told him that the Peace Community would not last long, with paramilitaries on one side and the army on the other, and the "military justice system would allow them to do what they want" (*el fuero military les iba a permitir hacer lo que quisieran*). He was released after half an hour.

There have been repeated reports that paramilitaries, as well as the armed forces, are in the area. Peasant farmer **Buenaventura Hoyos Hernández** was detained by paramilitaries on 31 August in the hamlet of La Hoz, Apartadó Municipality neighboring the Peace Community. He was last seen, tied up, on 3 September, as paramilitaries were taking him away from La Hoz. His family has fled La Hoz, as have others since 26 August, when paramilitaries established themselves in the hamlet, over 50 people have fled their homes. Local sources say they have seen soldiers 400 meters from the paramilitaries in La Hoz, but taking no action. Paramilitaries have been visiting several hamlets of the Peace Community, particularly in late August, asking for specific members of the Peace Community on lists of names, labeling them as guerrillas.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area, including Buenaventura Hoyos Hernández; urging the authorities to establish his whereabouts;
- Urging the authorities to order full and impartial investigations into the enforced disappearance of Buenaventura Hoyos Hernández, the forced displacement, the threats by members of the armed forces and the threats and presence of paramilitaries, 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 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 30 OCTOBER 2013 TO:

President

Señor Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República,
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,
 Bogotá
 COLOMBIA
 Fax: 011 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: 011 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:

Ambassador Carolina Barco Isakson, Embassy of Colombia
 2118 Leroy Place, NW, Washington DC 20008
 Fax: 1 202 232 8643 | Email: embassyofcolombia@colombiaemb.org

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action 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 and villages 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 170 of its members and other civilians living in the area 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. Many of the killings have coincided with periods of intense threats against the Peace Community and appear to have been part of attempts to intimidate its members.

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 demobilized in a government-sponsored process that began in 2003, 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.

In December 2012 a Constitutional reform was passed which broadened the scope of military justice, followed by an enabling law to the reform in June 2013. Amnesty International has expressed concern that this reform will increase impunity for violations of human rights and international law committed by the members of the security forces. (See press release, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/colombia-congress-should-reject-law-reforming-military-justice-system-2013->).

Names: Buenaventura Hoyos Hernández (m), members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and other civilians living in the area

Issue(s): Abduction, Enforced disappearance, Death threats

UA: 255/13

Issue Date: 18 September 2013

Country: Colombia