

via email: [contacto@presidencia.gov.co](mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co)

**Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos**

President of the Republic of Colombia

via email: [despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co](mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co)

**Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira**

Attorney General of Colombia

December 23, 2017

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the tactics of the paramilitary group Gaitanistas Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC), which is issuing death threats to community leaders it advances to gain control of the village of the **Peace Community of San José de Apartadó**, in Antioquia Department.

On November 30 a group of paramilitary fighters patrolling in San José de Apartadó told **Gildardo Tuberquia**, a member of the Internal Council of the Peace Community of San José, they were going to kidnap and kill him and any other community members who continue to report these incidents. They threatened that “they will kill these sons of [expletive] community members who are getting in the way of their economic plans for the region”. Gildardo Tuberquia has received at least eight death threats in 2017. He has reported AGC activity and his town’s need for protection, both nationally and internationally. He is at great risk because of these threats; he can travel only within San José de Apartadó and with international accompaniment.

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is made up of people living in a number of hamlets in the municipality of Apartadó. They 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 any armed party. In return, the members of the Peace Community demand that the parties to the armed conflict stay out of their communities and respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with the warring parties.

Since 2002 we have written thirty letters to Colombian officials since 2002 about the human rights violations of the people of the San José Peace Community. Since the Peace Community was established in 1997, more than 200 of its members have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance, while others have been threatened or sexually assaulted. The continued presence and threats from paramilitaries places members of the Community and other local inhabitants at increasing risk.

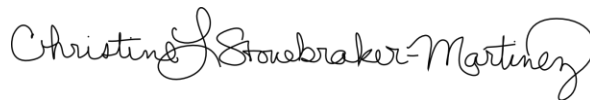
We **strongly urge** that you

- take immediate measures to guarantee the right to life and physical safety for Gildardo Tuberquia, the other members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and the other civilians in the region who face the grave threats they have reported;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and investigate their connections to government security forces, in compliance with international human rights obligations;

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator



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, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept – via email  
Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia-human rights affairs, US State Dept – via email  
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia and for Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights – via email  
US Senators Brown & Portman  
US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan – via email

UA 263/17\_Colombia

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