

<p><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Gustavo Petro Urrego</b> President of the Republic of Colombia <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a></p>	<p><b>Sra. Luz Adriana Camargo</b> Attorney General of Colombia <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a></p>
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June 24, 2024

Dear President Petro and Attorney General Camargo:

We are writing to express our grave concern about the recent threats and violent incidents targeting **leaders and residents of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó** in the rural area of Urabá, Antioquia Department. During April and May, **Germán Graciano**, the legal representative of the Peace Community, received phone calls with death threats. In mid-April, paramilitaries held a meeting with local leaders of community action boards in the township; at least one paramilitary threatened the extermination of the community. More recent threats emerged during the week of June 12 highlight the growing control in Urabá by the Clan del Golfo, one of the largest criminal organizations in the country, reviving the specter of paramilitary violence that has long plagued this area.

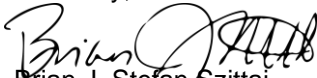
The harassment of the Peace Community began in late December, escalating on March 19 with the murders of **Nallely Sepúlveda** and her brother-in-law, **Édinson David**, age 14 (cf our letter 21 APRIL 2024), who were close relatives of the community's humanitarian coordinator. Nallely Sepúlveda had recently opposed the construction of an illegal road through the community's environmentally protected zone, a project suspected of benefiting transnational corporations. Road construction is managed by paramilitaries with ties to the 17th Army Brigade, who allegedly took over community land without permits. Armed intruders shot them in the head at their home on the Las Delicias farm.

In addition to the threats against Germán Graciano, the Peace Community has outlined other violations such as illegal detentions, theft, and espionage by individuals identifying as paramilitaries. The Peace Community notes that the motives behind these events echo the historical abuses during Chiquita Brands' operations in the area, driven by economic and political interests that threaten the community's autonomy and rights to their land. Seventeen years ago, Chiquita pleaded guilty to having paid some \$1.7 million to the paramilitary organization United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, the predecessor of Clan del Golfo; to settle federal criminal charges brought by the US Department of Justice, the corporation paid out \$25 million in damages. On June 10 of this year, a federal jury in Florida found Chiquita Brands liable for the killings of eight men (banana workers) between 1997 and 2004 and ordered Chiquita to pay their families \$38.3 million in damages.

The farming families of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó have suffered many tragedies over the past 27 years: murders, sexual violence, massive displacements, destruction of homes, usurpation of land, and burning of crops. We call upon your integrity and humanity to:

- conduct an investigation into the threats against Germán Graciano and bring those responsible to justice
- review the various precautionary and protective measures ordered since 1997 for the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the Constitutional Court of Colombia
- in consultation with community leaders, offer protection measures to members of the Peace Community

Sincerely,

  
Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

  
Christine L. Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves, Minister of Interior ~ via email  
Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail  
José Luis Caballero Ochoa, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email, US mail  
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email  
CAJAR: Colectivo de Abogados y Abogadas "José Alvear Restrepo" ~ via email  
US Embassy: Francisco Palmieri (Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim); Adam Levy (human rights) ~ via email  
US State Department: Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email  
US Senators from Ohio: Brown & Vance and US Representatives from Ohio: Beatty, Brown, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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