

PEACE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSÉ DE APARTADÓ



A girl of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó standing on a stone in the Memorial Park where several members of the peace community are buried, September 2008.

Since the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó was formed in 1997, more than 170 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 Peace Community of San José de Apartadó consists of individuals who defend their right not to 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 to either side.

In return, they demand that the parties to the conflict do not enter their communities and that they respect their decision not to participate in or to collaborate with any of the warring parties.

Both the paramilitaries and guerillas are angry that the Peace Community will not side with them and both accuse them of siding with the other party and do not trust them.

Soldiers accused community members of being guerrillas and that the members of the community would be exterminated. They warned that they were waiting for the right moment to wipe out ("arrasar") the whole Peace Community.

The Court of Human Rights' order has been ignored so far

The Court of Human Rights has ordered the Colombian authorities to protect the San José Peace Community. This has been ignored and the community is still threatened and not protected by authorities.

"Despite the gravity of the crimes committed against the Peace Community, and despite the fact that many of these crimes took place quite a number of years ago, (...) still no-one has been convicted for these crimes."



© Private (Children of the Peace Community) in 1999

Over time, many unjust things have happened to the community...

More than 170 of the Peace Community's members have been **killed or subjected to enforced disappearance**; bodies of adults and children have been found **mutilated**., the paramilitaries **attempted to rape** a 15 year old girl and then threatened her; they created pamphlets, and distributed them stating that they were carrying out 'social cleansing' and including **a list of people who had been ordered to leave the area or be killed**.

Total impunity - failure to bring human rights violations to justice...

Only five paramilitaries have been sentenced for their part in the mass killings. Another nine paramilitaries are awaiting sentencing after admitting responsibility. Initially 70 members of the Colombian Army were linked to criminal investigations, however most charges against these soldiers were dropped, and 10 soldiers have been completely cleared of their participation in the mass killings. Lawyers representing the victims of the killings have expressed concern about the court's ruling.

April and May 2011—the threats to the community continue...

Since the beginning of April 2011, paramilitaries have made repeated death threats against inhabitants of the Peace Community, telling them they should collaborate with the Army as informers to avoid grave trouble. They also entered neighbouring areas, warning that anyone wanting to join the Peace Community would be killed.

Through April and May 3 people were killed by gun shots or machete blows. One of the men was only 18. None of them were members of the Peace Community, but all had some links to the community and their names were on the 'death list' the paramilitaries possessed.

Despite the strong presence of the security forces in the area, these actions were unchallenged and no attempt was made to help the victims.



Pictures: Above: Vereda La Union in the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, March 2007 ©Private.

