

# Tamera Delegation Accompanies Threatened Peace Community in Colombia

**“Red Alert” in the Colombian peace community: On December 29th, paramilitaries entered the community’s facilities in an attempt to assassinate their legal representative, German Graciano Posso. Though this attempt was impeded at the last minute, the situation in the community remains highly dangerous as their leaders receive daily death threats and the government – instead of protecting them – slanders the community.**

Martin Winiecki, January 27 2018



## What’s the Peace Community?

The peace community of San José de Apartadó is a remarkable group of around 600, mostly displaced, peasants in the Urabá region of Antioquia in northern Colombia. In 1997 they joined together to create an example of nonviolent coexistence in the middle of a brutal war. They made commitments to not carry any weapons, exercise any type of violence, consume alcohol or drugs nor collaborate with any armed group. More than 200 of these nonviolent activists were killed over the last 21 years – they were often community leaders. Despite the severe persecution they have suffered, they continue to stand their ground, living a life of peaceful resistance while maintaining the spirit of

reconciliation and solidarity. They live in very simple conditions. Through their unwavering commitment to defending their lands with dignity and nonviolence, the community has inspired many communities of other displaced farmers, Indigenous people and Afro-Colombians to create similar peace communities throughout the country.

We've known the community since 2001 and have closely cooperated with them since 2005. We support the community through the [Global Campus](#), our education platform, in building a comprehensive model for a post-capitalist peace culture based on social structures of trust, cooperation with nature and decentralized autonomy.

## Increasing Threats and Attacks Since the Peace Deal

We accompany the peace process in Colombia with hope, but also with deep concern. Since September 2016, the peace community – like many other communities and human rights defenders in Colombia – has been increasingly exposed to the threats and attacks by paramilitaries. Since the 1960s, paramilitary units have operated in Colombia as illegal armed groups, often working on behalf of the economic interests of corporations and landowners while maintaining close links to the Colombian armed forces. They've been responsible for a large part of the casualties and displacements in the decades-long war. While the Havana peace process ended the conflict between the Colombian state and the FARC, it didn't sufficiently address the paramilitary violence, which hits Colombia's most vulnerable: farmers, Indigenous people and activists. Since the government signed the deal with the FARC, and the guerrilla begun retreating from the countryside, paramilitaries have taken over their posts in many places, brutally raising the pressure on activists and community leaders. According to the UN, [more than 100 human rights defenders have been killed in the country in 2017](#).

## Attack on German Graciano

In the peace community of San José de Apartadó this situation recently culminated drastically. On December 29th 2017, five armed men, presumably members of the paramilitary group "Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia" (AGC), broke into the peace community's compound, attempting to assassinate Mr. Germán Graciano Posso, the legal representative of the community. Several community members intervened to stop the assailants, and in the struggle Mr. Germán Graciano Posso and other members of the community were injured. Three of the attackers managed to flee while two were captured and delivered by the community to the "Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación" (CTI) on December 30th. However, according to the peace community, those same attackers were later seen at liberty on the streets of Apartadó and have renewed their threats against the community.

The peace community had already been informed of a plan to assassinate Mr. Germán Graciano Posso in mid-December, in the context of increasing paramilitary presence and actions in the Urabá region of Antioquia, where the community is based. The community had reported these threats, but the government did not take any action to protect them.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting on January 2nd 2018, the governor of Antioquia, Mr. Luis Perez Gutierrez, denied that paramilitaries had attacked the community and furthermore accused the community of propagating lies. These statements sadly demonstrate the manipulation and negligence of the Colombian authorities with regard to what is happening in San José de Apartadó and throughout much of the Colombian countryside. Likewise, the statements of the Antioquia governor remind us of dramatic events in the past, such as the San José massacre of February 21st 2005 when, just days after the atrocious killing of eight community members, then-President Mr. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, de facto outlawed the community by stating that they were concealing members of the guerrilla.

## **International Solidarity is a Condition for Survival**

As the Colombian state continues failing to protect the peace community from the attacks of illegal armed groups, international support and solidarity is what keeps them alive.

We've supported through immediate solidarity letters to the Colombian government and embassies in Colombia, mobilizing our global network to join us, as we and the wider international solidarity network have done for many years. We're happy to see the support of the [United Nations High Commission for Human Rights in Colombia](#) and the [European Union](#) that both called out to the Colombian state demanding protection for the Peace Community.

In addition to advocacy work, two elders of our community, Irma Faethke and Iris Wacker, will travel to Colombia to support our friends with their presence as human shields for five weeks during February and March. We also continue to hold the peace community in our prayers during our weekly sunrise meditation, the [Ring of Power](#).

We believe that the peace community can play a key role in the success of the Colombian peace process, as it has extensive experience in reconciliation work and community building. Former combatants could learn from them about how to live a peaceful, autonomous and sustainable life. We're ready to support this process with our experience in ecology, technology and above all our knowledge of social issues.

During her visit to the peace community in March 2017, our co-founder [Sabine Lichtenfels](#) developed a vision for peace in Colombia: [https://youtu.be/ Evfdhs4ak4](https://youtu.be/Evfdhs4ak4)

For justice and sustainable peace in Colombia, and throughout all of Latin America.