



FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION
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P R E S S R E L E A S E

May 25, 2005

Special Delegation to San José de Apartadó, Colombia

May 29 to June 2, 2005

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is sending an emergency delegation to Colombia next week to express the concern of the international community over the latest slaughter of members of the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó. The eight delegates, who include FOR executive director Pat Clark, will meet with peace community members, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Colombian Attorney General, other government officials and the U.S. Ambassador, William Wood.

On February 21-22, eight people, including three children, were killed in the district of the San Jose de Apartadó Peace Community, where the Fellowship of Reconciliation has a permanent human rights observer team. Though in the midst of a combat zone, the Peace Community refuses to support any armed group and eight years ago declared its neutrality in Colombia's ongoing civil wars. More than 130 Peace Community members have been killed in the eight years of the community's existence. Not a single perpetrator has been brought to justice. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2000 issued provisional [protection] measures on behalf of the Peace Community.

"We will be meeting with government and human rights officials to express our outrage at the latest massacre and to affirm the importance of witnessing for peace," said FOR's Pat Clark. "These peace community members have withstood a lot of pressure from all sides of the Colombian conflict, yet continue to remain neutral and refuse to be co-opted by either side. We intend to show them solidarity and support."

Another goal of the delegation, Clark said, was to make Americans more aware of U.S. policies that fuel the Colombian conflict. "It is my hope that people of faith and people concerned with human rights will learn more about the way our government's policies affect conflicts, not only in Colombia but worldwide."

Eyewitnesses to the brutal February killings, in which the dead were also mutilated, have implicated the Colombian army, which receives nearly \$600 million in U.S. military aid annually. The Colombian Ministry of Defense and Vice-President have accused the guerilla group FARC. The Colombian Attorney General's office is investigating but has not yet issued any statement.

Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department is delaying certification of more than \$90 million in military assistance to Colombia until the massacre is properly investigated.

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