**NOTE ON MEETING WITH GILDARDO TUBERQUIA, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEACE COMMUNITY OF SAN JOSE DE APARTADO, COLOMBIA.**

**On Friday, 10th. July 2015 at Findhorn Community, nr. Inverness, Scotland.**

Our initial discussion was spent in clarifying my understanding of the background to Gildardo’s Community and exploring the problems which had been occurring there for nearly twenty years. The main issues were to do with massacres which had occurred in the past, carried out by paramilitary groups in league with the Colombian army and impunity from being held to account on the part of those responsible for these occurrences. The same groups were also responsible for continuing constant harassment and threats towards members of the community together with further periodic killings. Gildardo was definite in saying that the army and paramilitaries were working together. He also said that he was sure the government was complicit in their activities towards the Community. He added that they were no longer experiencing trouble from FARC.

Gildardo also told me of a legal action brought by the community against the Colombian Government making a series of demands regarding the treatment of Peace Community members by paramilitary groups in collusion with the army.This action was heard in the Colombian Constitutional Court in 2012 and the hearing resulted in a decision in favour of all the Peace Community’s points. This was given effect by Order No. 164 of 6/7/2012 requiring the government to take action on these points:

* The State, through its President, was required to retract statements previously made by the military and ex-President Uribe (2002-10), alleging that the Peace Community was in league with FARC, the guerrilla organisation involved in a civil war against the Colombian authorities, thus causing stigmatisation towards them.
* Bring an end to impunity for crimes committed against the community in relation to past and present events, ie. massacres, murders, harassment,death threats, etc., giving effect to the ruling of the Constitutional Court in December 2007.(T-1025/07). (Establishment of a Commission to evaluate the lack of justice)
* Ensure the right of the Community not to be drawn into the civil war conflict. (Constitutional Court ruling T-1025/07) (Establishment of humanitarian zones that civilians could take refuge in during conflicts).
* Protect the Community from any further occurrence of the injustices and suffering that had been caused to them. (Constitutional Court ruling T-1025/07). (Removal of police station in San Jose town because it put the civilian population at risk).

A clear time frame was provided for these rulings to be implemented, resulting from which, in December 2013, President Santos made a public statement apologising to the Peace Community for the stigmatisation and treatment which had occurred towards it, resulting from accusations made by both his predecessor, ex-President Uribe (2002-2010) and by the military that the Peace Community had links with the guerrilla organisation FARC, with which government forces had been fighting a Civil War for many years. He further acknowledged the massacres which the Community had suffered in past years, the most recent in 2005 and that since then a further 190 assassinations of Community members had occurred. He stated that “ ...as the State, we express unwavering commitment to the respect and protection of human rights, as well as our compliance to the courts that oversee these rights.”

I asked Gildardo whether anything had changed since then and he did say positively that there had been no further killings of Peace Community members by either the paramilitaries or the army. Otherwise, matters on the ground had not changed significantly. I further asked whether he felt that the Amnesty campaign letters which we and many other supporters have been sending to the President and members of the Government about the Peace Community had any effect. He said that this was important to continue and that they did mean something to the Government. He thought using Amnesty headed notepaper was a good idea. He did not think that the general lack of official replies was of significance.

Regarding any other action campaigners might take, Gildardo was in favour of copies of our letters being emailed to the Community as their awareness of this would help to strengthen their resolve. He did not consider this would involve any risk to them. He added that it would be helpful for our letters to keep making reference to the points in the Constitutional Court ruling re CDP. He also suggested facilitating a support group in school or university, which could communicate directly with the Peace Community by email. This could be done through their Spanish class/ department so correspondence could be in Spanish. I agreed that we would work on this.

Our meeting was very positive. An interpreter helped with some of the discussion. Gildardo was leaving UK on the following day to visit other countries in Europe.

Sandy Stuart (Dundee Amnesty Group).

(July, 2015).