

URGENT ACTION

PEASANT FARMERS AT RISK OF FORCED EVICTION

Peasant farmers in El Tamarindo on the outskirts of Barranquilla, northern Colombia, are at risk, facing a possible forced eviction and having received paramilitary death threats.

These families are at risk of forced eviction from **El Tamarindo**, Atlántico Department, northern Colombia, after local authorities offered them inadequate resettlement, which would only benefit a few and leave the majority of the households homeless. Since the late 1990s, families who were forcibly displaced in the course of the armed conflict began to move to the farm. Fourteen years later they have still not received effective remedy. By 2001, 130 families had peacefully occupied four areas of the farm. There have been repeated attempts by Barranquilla District administrative state authorities, the district ombudsman's office, the army, police and armed men, to force them off the land, resulting in the forced eviction of some families. Safeguards required by international law, including to consult them about alternative solutions, to provide adequate notice and to properly and clearly identify the areas affected by the eviction, have not been respected. Following previous forced evictions, some of those forcibly evicted are now also occupying El Mirador, one of the four areas of the El Tamarindo farm, which they declared and was recognized by civil society as a Humanitarian Zone, Refuge of Peace and Hope (Espacio Humanitario, Refugio de Paz y Esperanza) on 13 April 2014. There is currently a risk that they will be forcibly evicted from that area. El Tamarindo farm is in an area that was declared part of a Free Trade Zone in 2007 and since 2008 local businesses have been claiming ownership of the land occupied by the families.

In addition to the forced evictions, peasant farmers of El Tamarindo have been threatened by paramilitaries, who have had a long history of collusion with state security forces. Most recently, a death threat naming Juan Martínez, one of the community leaders, signed by the paramilitary group Black Eagles Northern Bloc Atlantic Coast (Bloque Norte Costa Atlántica Águilas Negras), was circulated on 11 January 2015.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to ensure that families of El Tamarindo are not forcibly evicted;
- Urging them to guarantee the safety of the families of El Tamarindo including through full and impartial investigations into the death threats, taking into account their needs and demands, so that they are able to campaign for the recognition of their rights to the land without fear and intimidation;
- Reminding them to guarantee the right to an effective remedy to those forcibly displaced in the conflict and families who have been forcibly evicted so far, including access to resettlement in conditions of security and dignity in line with international human rights standards;
- Calling for action to dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the area, break any links between the security forces and these groups and bring those responsible for supporting these groups to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 MAY 2015 TO:

President

Juan Manuel Santos
 Presidente de la República
 Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26
 Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: 011 57 1 596 0631
**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
 Excmo Sr Presidente Santos**

Governor of Atlántico Department

Dr. José Antonio Segebre Berardinelli
 Gobernador del Departamento del Atlántico
 Gobernación del Atlántico
 Calle 40, Cra. 45 y 46
 Barranquilla, Atlántico, Colombia
**Salutation: Dear Governor / Estimado Sr.
 Gobernador**

And copies to:

ASOTRACAMPO
 Carrera 19 #15a - 38
 Barrio Villanorte
 Corregimiento La Playa
 Barranquilla, Atlántico
 Colombia

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Luis Carlos Villegas, Embassy of Colombia
 2118 Leroy Place, NW, Washington DC 20008
Tel: 202 387 8338 | Email: embassyofcolombia@colombiaemb.org

Please let us know if you took action so that we can track our impact! EITHER send a short email to uan@aiusa.org with "UA 103/13 " in the subject line, and include in the body of the email the number of letters and/or emails you sent, OR fill out this [short online form](#) (press Ctrl + click on link) to let us know how you took action. Thank you for taking action! Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 103/13. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/021/2014/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Millions of hectares of land have been seized during Colombia's long-running armed conflict, often through serious human rights abuses and violations committed against the rightful occupants, especially Indigenous People, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities. During the course of the armed conflict, the warring parties – paramilitaries and the security forces, acting either separately or in collusion, and guerrilla groups – have driven almost six million people from their homes.

Some 130 families who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Cesar, Córdoba, Magdalena and Sucre departments in the course of the conflict, occupied 120 hectares of the El Tamarindo farm, in Atlántico Department, in 2001. The farm had been abandoned. In 2007, the state authorities announced that a Free Trade Zone would be established in an area including the El Tamarindo farm. In 2008 a local business began legal proceedings claiming ownership of the land.

A group of armed men, suspected to be paramilitaries operating in the area linked to business interests, has repeatedly threatened to kill peasant farmers living in El Tamarindo. Narciso Enrique Tehrán Mejía, the son of the vice-president of the Association of Land Workers (Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo, ASOTRACAMPO) was shot dead as he slept on 12 April 2013 in El Tamarindo.

The local civilian authorities used the security forces in an unsuccessful attempt to enforce orders to evict the peasant farmers on 28 January 2012; these orders had reportedly been obtained by powerful economic actors who are claiming ownership of the land. This was one of the instances in which local armed men threatened the peasant farmers during an attempted eviction. There have been repeated attempts to forcibly evict those living in El Tamarindo, some of them successfully carried out.

On 7 November 2013, 28 families were forcibly evicted from their land in the Beitjala area of the El Tamarindo farm by the anti-riot police ESMAD and police. Three people were injured and taken to a hospital following the forced eviction. The peasant farmer families lost their crops and some of their animals. The forced eviction came a few days after death threats by the paramilitary group Rastrojos Urban Commands Barranquilla (Rastrojos – Comandos Urbanos Barranquilla).

Between 9 November 2013 and 10 March 2014 members of the II Brigade of the Military Police set up a post on the El Tamarindo farm. Witnesses in the area report that they have seen the military police and the armed men together and have seen them undertaking joint patrols.

Name: Peasant farmers of El Tamarindo

Issues: Forced eviction, Death threats, Economic social and cultural rights

Further information on UA: 103/13 (19 April 2013) and updates (6 November 2013, 27 March 2014, 4 June 2014)

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Country: Colombia