

via fax: 011 57 1 337 5890/342 0592 Senor Presidente Alvaro Uribe Velez President of the Republic of Colombia	via fax: 011 57 1 565 7682 /337 1351 Dr. Francisco Santos Calderon Vice-President of the Republic de Colombia
via fax: 011 571 640 0491/691 5500 Dr. Volmar Antonio Perez Ortiz National Human Rights Ombudsman of Colombia	via email: alcaldia@elpenon-bolivar.gov.co Senor Catalino Meza Ruidiaz Alcaldía del Peñón Bolívar, Colombia
via email: contactenos@minagricultura.gov.co Andrés Fernandez Acosta Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development	

August 11, 2009

Dear Sirs:

We are seriously concerned for the welfare and safety of **123 campesino families** of the community of Las Pavas, in South Bolívar province. Early on July 14, members of the National Police and the Mobile Riot Police Squad surrounded the community, blocking the movement of the families living there and those accompanying them. At 1:00 p.m., the police entered the community, destroyed seven campesino homes, seized tools, and carried out the order of Police Inspector Omaldo García Capataz to displace the 123 families, which include several pregnant women and 100 children, including newborns. Representatives of the National Human Rights Ombudsperson's Office and the Municipal Human Rights Defendor's Office opposed the order and requested its suspension, but the Inspector denied their request. The families have been displaced to the Buenos Aires district of the municipality of Peñón, South Bolivar province.

Large palm oil industries that wish to acquire the land of Las Pavas from the current absentee landlord, a relative of deceased cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar, have been threatening families who have lived and worked the land for the past twelve years. The Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER) initiated a process of eminent domain, which will claim the land for the government and then grant titles to the residents of Las Pavas. However, the palm oil companies are short-circuiting this process by displacing the families.

Therefore we **strongly urge** that you:

- guarantee the immediate return of the families that have been displaced from their land;
- press INCODER to expedite their process of claiming the land by eminent domain, a process requested by the community and already underway;
- make financial reparations to the community for the damages caused by members of the police while carrying out the displacement order;
- bring humanitarian aid to the displaced families, with special attention given to infants, pregnant women and the elderly.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Coordinator

cc: Carolina Barco Isakson, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 William Brownfield, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.315.2197
 Nan N. Fife, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173
 Javier Hernández Valencia, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Colombia office ~ via fax: 011-571. 658-3300
 Paolo Carozza, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Voinovich ~ via email
 US Representatives Boccieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

CPT_Displacement_08/09_Colombia

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: