

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631  
**Exmo. Sr. Juan Manuel Santos**  
 President of Colombia

via fax: 011 571 286 2649  
**Sr. Ministro Juan Camilo Restrepo**  
 Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

May 12, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the killing of **Narciso Enrique Tehrán Mejía** in El Tamarindo, Galapa Municipality, Atlántico Department. He was a member of the Association of Land Workers (ASOTRACAMPO). While he was asleep in his home on April 12 he was killed by gunmen thought to be paramilitaries using a pistol with a silencer. His father Narciso Tehrán Maldonado is the vice-president of ASOTRACAMPO, which represents over 130 families who have peacefully occupied part of the El Tamarindo farm since 2001.

Some 135 families who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Córdoba, Magdalena and Cesar departments moved to the 120 hectares of the El Tamarindo Farm in 2001. The farm had been abandoned. In 2007, 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 paramilitary group operating in the area has repeatedly threatened to kill peasant farmers living in El Tamarindo. The local civilian authorities used the security forces in an attempt to enforce orders to evict the peasant farmers on January 28, 2012; these orders had been obtained by powerful economic interests who are claiming ownership of the land. Local paramilitaries who threatened the peasant farmers were unsuccessful in their attempts to evict them.

A paramilitary threatened an El Tamarindo peasant farmer on April 9, telling him that he had to leave the area: "You are going to leave this place whether you like it or not, this land has an owner."

**We strongly urge that you**

- guarantee the safety of the families of El Tamarindo, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the death threats received by the families, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- fulfill your obligations set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
- take action against paramilitary forces and break any links between them and the security forces, in line with repeated UN recommendations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
 Coordinator

CC: Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ U.S. mail  
 Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
 P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
 Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
 José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 103/13\_Colombia

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