

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

**Excmo. Señor Juan Manuel Santos**  
President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 266 1003

**Señor Juan Carlos Pinzón**  
Defense Minister of Colombia

December 23, 2013

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned for the safety of **Olga Lucia Quintero, Mauricio Ramos, Juan Carlos Quintero and other members of the Peasant Farmer Association of Catatumbo (ASCAMCAT)**. On December 17 an armed man and woman forced their way into the home of Olga Lucia Quintero and Mauricio Ramos in Cúcuta, Catatumbo region, in Norte de Santander Department. Finding that Olga Lucia Quintero was not at home they gagged the babysitter and stole a safe containing USB sticks, two hard drives and a computer belonging to Mauricio Ramos, which contained ASCAMCAT information, including members' details and work plans.

ASCAMCAT works to protect the fundamental rights of the peasant farmers in the Catatumbo region and demands the implementation in Catatumbo of Law 160 of 1994 on the Peasant Farmer Reservation Zone (ZRC). The ZRC, established by the Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER), aims to support the stabilization and consolidation of the peasant farmer economy, provide a means to secure land tenure and access to social services and to guarantee food security. ASCAMCAT was one of the organizations leading the peasant farmer protests in June and July in the Catatumbo region, during which four protesters were killed (cf our letter of July 12).

The break-in described above is the latest in a series of attacks on members and affiliates of ASCAMCAT. On December 2, Jorge Eliécer Calderón Chiquillo, age 20, a peasant farmer and member of ASCAMCAT, was killed in Campo Seis, Tibú municipality, in Norte de Santander Department. On November 19, military officers questioned National Protection Unit bodyguards assigned to ASCAMCAT member Juan Carlos Quintero Sierra about their authority to carry weapons. On November 15, Juan Carlos Quintero was detained for 30 minutes in a military vehicle while doing ASCAMCAT work in San Pablo, Teorema in Norte de Santander Department.

We believe these incidents are directly related to ASCAMCAT's peaceful and legitimate human rights work defending peasant and land rights. Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- provide Olga Lucia Quintero, Mauricio Ramos, Juan Carlos Quintero and other ASCAMCAT members with effective protection measures, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order immediate, full and impartial investigations in the civilian justice system into the killing of Jorge Eliécer Calderón and the break-in of the home of Olga Lucia Quintero, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Co-Coordinator

copies: ASCAMCAT ~ via US mail  
First Secretary for Human Rights and Minorities, Embassy of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
Andrew Bowen, Interim Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
Olivia Franken, 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 339/13 Colombia

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