

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Estimado Sr. Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via Fax: 011 57 1 261 6287 Dr. Andrés Villamizar Pachón Director of the National Protection Unit of Colombia
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January 24, 2014

Dear Sirs:

We are very concerned about an attempted attack and threats to **Benjamin Sánchez**, a peasant farmer in El Carpintero, Cabuyaro Municipality in Meta Department. On January 15 while he was working on his land, an armed man whose face was covered, called his name and started shooting at him. Benjamin Sánchez was not hit by the shots because he managed to hide. The day before, another man working with him saw an armed man following Benjamin Sánchez. On October 27, 2013, Benjamin Sánchez also received a threatening phone call which said: "You are a snitch, that is why the business of El Carpintero is damaged, there is a revolver over your head."

Under the terms of the Victims and Land Restitution Law that went into effect at the beginning of 2012, some of those who were forcibly displaced from El Carpintero by paramilitary groups have sought restitution of their lands. Paramilitaries and agro-industrial companies have an economic interest in the land that the families are claiming. As a result, some families campaigning for their land restitution have been threatened. On July 10, 2012, **Edwin Alcides Duran Peña**, the son of a leader in the community, was killed.

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- provide safety measures to Benjamin Sánchez and the families claiming land restitution in El Carpintero, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the attempted attack on Benjamin Sánchez's life, the killing of Edwin Alcides Duran Peña and other threats to El Carpintero community members, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

cc: NGO Corporacion Claretiana ~ via US mail
Daniel Pedraza, 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 in Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
Oliva Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax 202.458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 13/14_Colombia

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