

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631
Excmo Sr. Juan Manuel Santos
 President of the Republic of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 1 570 2000 ext. 2023
Estimado Sr. Eduardo Montealegre
 Attorney General of Colombia

May 12, 2014

Dear President Santos:

We are deeply concerned about repression of organized workers in the agricultural sector (ASTRACAN-FENSUAGRO) and public sector (SINTRAEMCALI).

Authorities unjustly detained **17 agricultural workers and union members** from Leiva municipality in Nariño Department on April 17. These arrests are part of an ongoing campaign of retaliation against farmers who participated in the recent National Agrarian and Popular Strike and the previous farmers' strikes in the Catatumbo and coffee-growing regions. The detained workers are all members of the Association of Peasant Workers of Nariño (ASTRACAN) which is the regional affiliate of the National United Trade Union of Agricultural (FENSUAGRO), the largest union of agricultural workers in the country.

Public sector workers in Cali are also under attack. On April 16 incendiary bombs were thrown at the headquarters of SINTRAEMCALI, the public sector union in Cali, Valle del Cauca Department. This attack occurred five days after a court decision ordering President Santos and the Vice-President Garzón to ask forgiveness for crimes committed against several unions by the administration of former president Álvaro Uribe.

These are only two actions in a series of high profile arrests and mass detentions of union and peasant leaders in the past two years. Over the past decade, 15 SINTRAEMCALI members have been killed and more than 100 have received threats. "Operation Dragon" was a government-supported assassination plot against the union's leaders and other regional human rights defenders.

In light of the unacceptable tactics used against union members, we **strongly urge** that you:

- grant freedom to the 17 members of ASTRACAN and dismiss all charges against them;
- thoroughly investigate the bombing of the SINTRAEMCALI headquarters and bring those responsible to justice;
- immediately comply with the court decision demanding apologies for crimes committed against the SINTRAEMCALI, SINTRAUNICOL and SINTRATELEFONOS unions during the previous administration.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

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 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via fax

AFGJ_Colombia

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