

URGENT ACTION

PEASANT FARMER KILLED AFTER THREATS

Gunmen thought to be paramilitaries have killed a land rights activist in northern Colombia, and have threatened to kill peasant farmers trying to assert their rights over land in the region.

Land rights activist **Narciso Enrique Tehrán Mejía** was shot dead as he slept on 12 April. He was a member of the Association of Land Workers (*Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo*, ASOTRACAMPO). He had been in his home in El Tamarindo, Galapa Municipality, Atlántico Department. According to police reports, he was killed by a pistol with a silencer. His father Narciso Tehrán Maldonado is the vice-president of ASOTRACAMPO, which represents over 130 families who have been peacefully occupying part of the El Tamarindo farm since 2001.

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 28 January 2012; these orders had been obtained by powerful economic interests who are claiming ownership of the land. Local paramilitaries threatened the peasant farmers during this attempted eviction, but it did not succeed.

A paramilitary threatened an El Tamarindo peasant farmer on 9 April, 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" (*Saldrán de aquí a las buenas o a las malas, estas tierras tienen su dueño*).

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MAY 2013 TO:

President

Presidente Juan Manuel Santos
Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26,
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 596 0631

**Salutation: Dear President Santos/
Excmo Sr. Presidente Santos**

Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development
Juan Camilo Restrepo
Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, Carrera 8 No.12B-31, Piso 5,
Bogotá, Colombia

Email: despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.co
**Salutation: Dear Minister/
Estimado Sr. Ministro**

And copies to:

Human rights NGO
Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz,
Calle 61A, No. 17-26,
Bogotá,
Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Some 135 families who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Córdoba, Magdalena and Cesar departments occupied 120 hectares of the El Tamarindo Farm, in Atlántico Department, in 2001. The farm had been abandoned. In 2007, the 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.

Millions of hectares of land have been seized during Colombia's long-running armed conflict, often through violence against the rightful owners, especially Indigenous People, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities. The various parties to the conflict – paramilitaries and the security forces, acting either separately or in collusion, and guerrilla groups – have driven over five million people from their homes during the course of Colombia's long-running armed conflict.

Leaders of displaced communities and those seeking the return of stolen lands have been killed or threatened for claiming rights over lands on which they have lived and farmed over several years. More people have been threatened or killed since the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448) came into force at the beginning of 2012. This law provides for reparations for many survivors of human rights abuses, including those perpetrated by state agents, as well as land restitution for some of those forced off their lands. However, many victims of the conflict will still be excluded from making claims for reparation, while significant areas of land misappropriated might still not be returned to their rightful owners. There are not enough safeguards to ensure that people whose land is returned to them are not again forced to hand over control over their land, even to those who had driven them off it. Over the last year many of those campaigning for land restitution and the recognition of their rights over lands they have been occupying, or seeking to return to their lands, have been threatened or killed, and this may undermine the implementation of the law.

On 9 April 2013, only days before the killing in El Tamarindo, Elver Cordero Oviedo, of the Victims' Roundtable of Valencia Municipality, was killed in Valencia Municipality, Córdoba Department. He had been on his way to a local march for peace when two men on motorcycles shot him.

Name: families of El Tamarindo
Gender m/f: both

UA: 103/13 Index: AMR 23/017/2013 Issue Date: 19 April 2013