

# URGENT ACTION

## DISPLACED FAMILIES' LEADERS THREATENED

**Armed men believed to be Colombian paramilitaries have threatened, and apparently attempted to kill, leaders of the families forcibly displaced from the Hacienda Bellacruz farm, who are campaigning to return to their land.**

Three armed men asked for community leader **Elker León Cataño** at his home in the municipality of San Alberto, in the northern department of Cesar, on 20 August. He managed to escape. Elker León Cataño is a leader of families forcibly displaced from the Hacienda Bellacruz farm in Cesar Department in 1996 by paramilitaries operating with the armed forces. He is also a member of the Horizon Colombian Association of Displaced Population (*Asociación Colombiana Horizonte de Población Desplazada*, **ASOCOL**).

Three other ASOCOL leaders, **Fredy Antonio Rodríguez Corrales**, **Lidia Liliana Vásquez Pacheco** and **José de la Cruz Trujillo**, were returning from the departmental capital, Valledupar on 14 August when their way was blocked by another car in Bucaramanga, Santander Department. Three men got out of this car and started shooting at them. They managed to escape. They had just filed a complaint with the Valledupar office of the Human Rights Ombudsman about threats by paramilitaries. Fredy Antonio Rodríguez Corrales phoned his brother **Armando Rodríguez Corrales**, another ASOCOL leader, on that evening to tell him about the attack. Armando Rodríguez asked his bodyguards to check the perimeter of his house, which is also the ASOCOL office, in Aguachica Municipality, Cesar Department. They found two men who appeared to be keeping the building under surveillance. This attack and other threats against the leaders and families of Hacienda Bellacruz have taken place only a few months after a ruling by the state authorities in April, which could be an important step towards restitution of the land to the families.

### Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Expressing concern for the families displaced from Hacienda Bellacruz, and their leaders;
- Calling on the authorities to order a full and impartial investigation into the 20 August incident, the 14 August attack and previous death threats, and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to provide effective protection to those who request it, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Urging the authorities to take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with stated government commitments and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 OCTOBER 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 Foreign Affairs

María Ángela Holguín  
 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores  
 Palacio San Carlos  
 Calle 10 No. 5-51  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: +57 1 381 4742

**Salutation: Estimada Señora Ministra/  
 Dear Minister**

#### **And copies to:**

ASOCOL  
 Calle 4 No 36-52  
 Barrio Maria Eugenia  
 Aguachica  
 Cesar  
 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

Between February and March 1996, 287 peasant farmer families were forcibly displaced from the lands they had been occupying on the Hacienda Bellacruz farm by paramilitary forces operating with the support of the security forces. The paramilitaries burned the houses of the peasant farmers and their families, tortured them and threatened that they would kill them if they dared to return. Despite the presence of police and military forces in the area nothing was done to impede or halt the paramilitary operation, or to arrest those responsible within the farm or the surrounding area. Since then several of the evicted peasant farmers and those who attempted to help them have been killed, subjected to enforced disappearance or have received death threats.

The forced displacement in 1996 happened after Marulanda Ramírez Ltd, a company representing the family of the former Colombian Minister and Ambassador to the European Union Carlos Arturo Marulanda, lost a judicial appeal to reclaim part of the land occupied by peasant farmers in the Hacienda Bellacruz farm.

Part of the Hacienda Bellacruz farm was later sold to another company, which is claiming ownership of the land the displaced families claim as their own. African palm has been planted on at least some of the land claimed by them. Amnesty International has been told that the African palm has been planted in an attempt to make land restitution more difficult for the peasant farmers.

In April 2013 the Colombian Institute for Rural Development (*Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural*, INCODER) ruled that part of the Hacienda Bellacruz was official uncultivated land, which could be a first step for the land restitution for the displaced families.

ASOCOL was formed as an organization of some of the peasant farmer families who had been displaced from the Hacienda Bellacruz farm.

Names: Elker León Cataño (m), Fredy Antonio Rodríguez Corrales (m), Lidia Liliana Vásquez Pacheco (f), José de la Cruz Trujillo (m), Armando Rodríguez Corrales (m), other members of ASOCOL  
Gender m/f: both