

URGENT ACTION

PEASANT FARMER SHOT AT, COMMUNITY AT RISK

An armed man shot at peasant farmer Benjamin Sánchez in El Carpintero, central Colombia. He has been leading a land restitution process for those forcibly displaced from El Carpintero as a result of the armed conflict, and is the latest community member to receive threats or to be attacked as a result of his involvement in this process.

On 15 January, peasant farmer **Benjamin Sánchez** was working on his land when an armed man, whose face was covered, called his name and started shooting at him in El Carpintero, Cabuyaro Municipality, Meta Department. He managed to hide and was not hit by the shots. A day earlier, an armed man was seen following Benjamin Sánchez by another man working with him. On 27 October 2013, Benjamin Sánchez also received a threatening phone call where he was told: "You are a snitch, that is why the business of El Carpintero is damaged, there is a revolver over your head" (*es un sapo, por eso se dañan los negocios del carpintero, sobre su cabeza hay un revolver*).

Since 2012, some of those who were forcibly displaced from El Carpintero by paramilitary groups have sought restitution of their lands under the terms of the Victims and Land Restitution Law. Some families involved in this process have been threatened as a result of their campaign for land restitution. On 10 July 2012, **Edwin Alcides Duran Peña**, the son of a leader in the community, was killed. Paramilitaries and agro-industrial companies have an economic interest in the land that the families are claiming.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to ensure that Benjamin Sánchez and the families claiming land restitution in El Carpintero are safe, in strict accordance with their wishes;
- Urging them to 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, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to fulfill their obligations regarding the protection of human rights defenders as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 MARCH 2014 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**

Director of the National Protection Unit

Dr. Andrés Villamizar Pachón
 Director de la Unidad Nacional de
 Protección (UNP)
 Carrera 58 No. 10-51
 Bogotá, Colombia
 Fax: +57 1 261 6287

**Salutation: Dear Mr. Villamizar/
 Estimado Sr. Villamizar**

And copies to:

NGO
 Corporación Claretiana
 Carrera 15 No. 10-41
 Piso 3
 Bogotá, Colombia

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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, and 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 internal 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.

In 1997, the then Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Reforma Agraria, INCORA) gave farming land, known as El Carpintero, in Cabuyaro Municipality, Meta Department to some 85 families, about half of whom were victims of forced displacement due to the armed conflict, and the other half victims of natural catastrophes. In 1998, a large group of paramilitaries came into the area and established their base near El Carpintero. Many in the community displaced soon after, following threats by the paramilitaries and the killing of peasant farmer Omer Vargas Retamoza that same year. Most of those displaced have yet to return to El Carpintero.

Name: Benjamin Sánchez (m), Edwin Alcides Duran Peña (m), families of El Carpintero claiming land restitution (both)
Gender m/f: both

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