

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDERS SUPPORTING PEASANTS THREATENED

Nubia Acosta and Nevis Niño Rodríguez, two human rights defenders working with the peasant farmers of El Tamarindo in northern Colombia, have been threatened.

On 30 May Juan Martínez, a leader of the Association of Land Workers (Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo, ASOTRACAMPO), from the **El Tamarindo** farm, received a text message with a death threat against two human rights defenders. It read: "stop bugging us so much snitch they are going to kill you Nuvia Nevis we know everything you do" (*deja de joder tanto por sapo los van a mater novia [sic] nevis [sic] sabemos todo lo que hacen*). **Nubia Acosta** is a lawyer with the human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz) and **Nevis Niño Rodríguez** is a member of the Atlántico branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes de Estado, MOVICE). Both human rights defenders have been accompanying the peasant farmer families of El Tamarindo, Galapa municipality, Atlántico Department, in their campaign for recognition of their rights to the El Tamarindo farm. Nevis Niño Rodríguez previously received threats related to her involvement in this case, including a text message with a death threat on 3 May. Nubia Acosta was intimidated by armed men, thought to be paramilitaries, during some of the recent efforts by the authorities to forcibly evict the peasant farmer families from their land.

Since 2001 four areas of the El Tamarindo farm have been peacefully occupied by 130 families, who had been forcibly displaced in the course of the armed conflict. There have been repeated attempts to force them off the land, resulting in the forced eviction of some families. Following the forced evictions the families are only occupying El Mirador, one of the four areas, which they declared a Humanitarian Zone, Refuge of Peace and Hope (Espacio Humanitario, Refugio de Paz y Esperanza) on 13 April.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to guarantee the safety of Nubia Acosta, Nevis Niño Rodríguez and the families of El Tamarindo, in strict accordance with the needs and demands of the families and their supporters to continue their campaign for the recognition of their rights to the El Tamarindo land;
- Calling on them to order full and impartial investigations into the threats by the armed men, to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding them to guarantee the right to an effective remedy to victims of forced evictions and the right of forcibly displaced people living in El Tamarindo to resettlement in conditions of security and dignity in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
- Reminding them to fulfil their obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 JULY 2014 TO:

Minister of Interior

Aurelio Iragorri Valencia
Calle 12B No 8-46, Primer Piso
Bogotá, Colombia
Fax: +57 1 283 9876
Email:

mesadeentrada@mininterior.gov.co

Salutation: Dear Minister / Estimado Sr. Ministro

Mayor of Barranquilla

Elsa Noguera
Alcaldesa de Barranquilla
Calle 34 No. 43 - 31
Barranquilla, Colombia
Fax +57 5 339 9800 (say "deme tono por favor")

Salutation: Dear Mayor/ Estimada Sra. Alcaldesa

And copies to:

MOVICE Atlántico
c/o Nevis Niño Rodríguez
Carrera 21C No 25-42
Las Nieves
Barranquilla, 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. This is the third update of UA 103/14. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR23/013/2014/en

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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 occupants, especially Indigenous People, Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities. During the course of the armed conflict, the warring parties – paramilitaries and the security forces, acting either separately or in collusion, and guerrilla groups – have driven over five million people from their homes.

Some 130 families who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Cesar, Córdoba, Magdalena and Sucre departments in the course of the conflict, 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.

A group of armed men, suspected to be paramilitaries operating in the area linked to business interests, has repeatedly threatened to kill peasant farmers living in El Tamarindo. The local civilian authorities used the security forces in an unsuccessful attempt to enforce orders to evict the peasant farmers on 28 January 2012; these orders had reportedly been obtained by powerful economic actors who are claiming ownership of the land. This was one of the instances when local armed men threatened the peasant farmers during an attempted eviction.

Narciso Enrique Tehrán Mejía, the son of the vice-president of ASOTRACAMPO was shot dead as he slept on 12 April 2013 in El Tamarindo.

There have been repeated attempts to forcibly evict those living in El Tamarindo, some of them successfully carried out. On 7 November 2013, 28 families were forcibly evicted from their land in the Beitjala area of the El Tamarindo farm by the anti-riot police ESMAD and police. Three people were injured and taken to a hospital following the forced eviction. The peasant farmer families lost their crops and some of their animals. The forced eviction came a few days after death threats by the paramilitary group Rastrojos Urban Commands Barranquilla (Rastrojos – Comandos Urbanos Barranquilla).

Between 9 November 2013 and 10 March 2014 members of the II Brigade of the Military Police set up a post on the El Tamarindo farm. Witnesses in the area report that they have seen the military police and the armed men together and have seen them undertaking joint patrols.

MOVICE is a broad coalition of civil society organizations campaigning for truth, justice and reparation for the victims of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict. Its members have documented and exposed many killings and enforced disappearances carried out by the security forces and paramilitary groups.

The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission has been supporting efforts by Afro-descendant, Indigenous and peasant farmer communities in different parts of Colombia to reclaim their lands.

Name: Nubia Acosta (f), Nevys Niño Rodríguez (f), families of El Tamarindo
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 103/14 Index: AMR 23/021/2014 Issue Date: 4 June 2014