

via fax: 011 57 1 283 9876
Sr. Aurelio Irigorri Valencia
 Minister of the Interior of Colombia

via fax: 011 57 5 339 9800
Sra. Elsa Noguera
 Mayor of Barranquilla, Atlántico Department

June 26, 2014

Dear Sir and Madam:

We are concerned for the safety of **Nubia Acosta**, a lawyer with the human rights NGO Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP), and **Nevis Niño Rodríguez**, a member of the Atlántico branch of the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE). The two human rights defenders are working with peasant farmers to defend their land on the El Tamarindo Farm in Galapa municipality, Atlántico Department.

Some 135 families who had been forcibly displaced from their homes in Córdoba, Magdalena and Cesar departments moved to the 120 hectares of the abandoned El Tamarindo Farm in 2001. In 2007, state authorities announced that a Free Trade Zone would be established in the area. In 2008 a local business began legal proceedings claiming ownership of the land. A paramilitary group operating in the area has repeatedly threatened to kill the peasant farmers. Local civilian authorities have used the security forces to evict the peasant farmers. Between November 2013 and March 2014, the II Brigade of the Military Police set up a post on the El Tamarindo farm.

Juan Martínez is a leader of the Association of Land Workers (ASOTRACAMPO), which represents the El Tamarindo families. On May 30 he received a death threat by text: "stop bugging us so much snitch they are going to kill you Nuvia Nevis we know everything you do." Nevis Niño Rodríguez also received a death threat by text message on May 3. 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.

We wrote to officials in Colombia in May 2013 about the killing of ASOTRACAMPO member **Narciso Enrique Tehrán Mejía** in El Tamarindo. His father, Narciso Tehrán Maldonado, is the vice-president of ASOTRACAMPO. We await the results of that murder investigation.

Because of the ongoing conflict and potential violence, **we strongly urge** that you

- guarantee the safety of Nubia Acosta, Nevis Niño Rodríguez and the families of El Tamarindo, in strict accordance with the needs and demands;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats by the armed men, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- 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;
- fulfil your obligation to protect human rights defenders, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator

copies: Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission / Comisión Intereclesial Justicia y Paz ~ via fax
 MOVICE-Atlántico branch ~ via US mail
 Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
 Kevin Whitaker, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600
 Olivia Franken, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628
 José de Jesus Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

UA 103/13_Colombia

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