

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Presidente Juan Manuel Santos President of the Republic of Colombia	via email despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.co Estimado Sr. Ministro Aurelio Iragorri Valencia Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
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May 5, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are extremely concerned about the repeated threats to **Miguel Briceño**, leader of the peasant farmer community of El Porvenir in Puerto Gaitán Municipality, Meta Department. On April 6 a man who identified himself as being in charge in the area, made repeated telephone calls to Miguel Briceño, threatening him and his family. Miguel Briceño has previously received threatening telephone calls.

Although the peasant farmers have been grazing their cattle on the land of El Porvenir for fifty years, they still do not have legal title to the land. Their land had been adjudicated to people linked to the now deceased Víctor Carranza, one of the country's most powerful emerald entrepreneurs who was long suspected of having strong links to paramilitary groups. In July 2014, two years after a request was filed, the Colombian Institute of Rural Development (INCODER) issued a resolution revoking the illegal land titles that had been adjudicated. Those with the illegal land titles still remain on the land on which they are erecting fences. The peasant farmers face new constraints on their livelihoods because their cattle are being stolen.

We are concerned for the safety of Miguel Briceño and his family. Since the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448) was approved in June 2011, leaders seeking the return of stolen lands have been killed or threatened. Because we fear for the safety of all the people of El Porvenir, we **strongly urge** that you

- order a full and impartial investigation into threats against Miguel Briceño, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- provide effective protection to the Briceño family and the community of El Porvenir, in accordance with their wishes;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and to break their links with the security forces.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator

copies: Corporación Claretiana Morman Pérez ~ via email
Luis Carlos Villegas, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643
Adam Lenert, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
Tabatha Fairclough, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via email
José de Jesús Orozco Hernández, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3650
US Senators Brown & Portman
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

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