

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631 Excmo. Sr. Presidente <b>Juan Manuel Santos</b> President of the Republic of Colombia	via email <a href="mailto:despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.co">despachoministro@minagricultura.gov.co</a> Estimado Sr. Ministro <b>Aurelio Iragorri Valencia</b> Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
---	--

August 1, 2015

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged and extremely concerned that **Miguel Briceño**, leader of the peasant farmer community of El Porvenir in Puerto Gaitán Municipality, Meta Department continues to be threatened. On June 18 he received a threatening phone call from a man who identified himself as a commander of the paramilitary Self-Defense Forces of Colombia. The commander warned Miguel Briceño that the paramilitary group had been following him and his family. He demanded a meeting with Miguel Briceño and 14 other people, saying that they would become a military target if they did not comply. In recent weeks three men, who are not community members, have been killed on the El Porvenir lands. This has caused fear among the peasant farmer community of El Porvenir and could lead to the forced displacement of the community.

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 (cf our letter of May 5). On April 18 the President stated that Víctor Carranza's heirs had returned the land to the State, but the heirs' representatives remain on the land and are fencing it off to deny access to the peasant farmers of El Porvenir.

Because of our concern for the safety of Miguel Briceño, his family and the El Povenir community we **strongly urge** that you

- provide effective protection for Miguel Briceño and the El Povenir community in accordance with their wishes;
- order a full and impartial investigation into threats against Miguel Briceño, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take immediate action to effectively implement the INCODER resolution from July 2014;
- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups and break the links between them and the security forces.

Sincerely,

Christine Stonebraker-Martinez  
 Co-Coordinator

CC: Corporación Claretiana Morman Pérez ~ via email  
 Juan Carlos Pinzón, 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

UA 82/15 Update\_Colombia

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