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Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform

## *EMERGENCY NETWORK*

**ARC 0401 (0401ACOL)**

**01.08.04**

**Colombia: Violence against Colombian peasant organisations**

Colombian peasants' movements and organisations are suffering an escalation of violence inflicted by the state and paramilitary forces that has resulted in killings, detentions and displacement of peasants, blacks and indigenous people. This wave of violence is a result of the call for a "secure and democratic policy" by the Álvaro Uribe Vélez government. The government has promoted massive detentions of peasants. In this process of punishing and condemning, the state is violating the rights of the leaders of peasants, blacks and indigenous people. The Colombian authorities carry out campaigns to discredit and criminalise peasant organisations by associating them with subversion, in order to legitimise their brutal repression.

**With respect to this severe situation of violations of human rights, it is of outmost importance to pressurise the Colombian authorities to take urgent measures to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the peasants, the blacks and the indigenous communities of Colombia. Please send letters to the President of the Republic, with a copy to the Vice President. Please also send a copy to the Peasant Convergence of Black and Indigenous People, la Convergencia Campesina, Negra e Indígena (CNI).**

### **Background**

Numerous organisations are suffering from the repression of the Colombian State, as well as from the actions carried out by the paramilitary groups. The National Union Federation, La Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria (FENSUAGRO), has been a victim of an authentic pursuit of their regional leaders: on November 11, five peasant leaders RICARDO ESPEJO, MARCO ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ, GERMAN BERNAL, and JOSE CESPEDES were brutally killed in the Municipality of Cajamarca. In Arauca, five unionists APOLINAR HERRERA, RUDY ROBLES, NEY MEDRANO, and POLICARPO PADILLA were detained. The brothers AUGUSTO FONSECA, JOSÉ RAFAEL FONSECA, and RAMÓN FONSECA, who were active members of the Peasant Union of the Atlantic SINTRAGRICOLAS, as well as SAUL COLPAS, departmental president of SINTRAGRICOLAS, were likewise killed.

Moreover, forced disappearance of VICTOR JIMENEZ FRUTO, president of SINTRAGRICOLAS, section of Ponedera, and the displacement of ALVARO LONDOÑO Y SUNILDA COLPAS were reported. Furthermore, members of the Agricultural Workers' Union of Meta (SINTRAGRIM), Bajo Ariari section were forced into exile and more than eighty leaders in the Municipality of Cartagena del Chairá, Department of Caquetá lead by VICTOR OIME, were detained. They all belonged to the Agrarian Union Committee. In addition, union leaders of SINTRAPALMA, Puerto Wilches, ARIANO LEON, JULIO ARTEAGA, PABLO VARGAS, ALIRIO RINCON and RAUBERTO RODRIGUEZ, among others, were forcibly evicted.

Some members of the Womens' Association of Peasants and Indigenous (ANMUCIC) have suffered persecution, displacement and collective threats that had caused their national board solicit international to go into exile due to these permanent attacks. The Workers Union of the old institute of Agrarian Reform SINTRADIN has also been a target for repression: on November 16, MARIO SIERRA, leader of the Arauca section was killed. LUIS JESUS RODRIGUEZ,

ALONSO CAMPIÑO and DIOGENES, who were all members of the Usuario Peasant Association – Unity and Reconstruction - ANUC-UR have suffered persecution in the Municipality of Ricaurte and in the departments of Cauca and Nariño.

In this cycle of violence, indigenous sectors and their communities, for example, CONCUAMOS of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and in BELAYAS de Arauca, have witnessed killings of their members. In the case of one organisation situated in the indigenous zone of Putumayo, massive detentions have taken place, among these, the detention of Vice President of OZIP. Similar incidents have taken place in GUAMBIANOS de Silvia Cauca, who have lost nine of their members during the last year.

In Colombia, close to two million peasants have been violently expelled from their land. Distribution of land is unjust and a process of re-concentration of land is taking place today in areas of more than two thousand hectares. This process has been accompanied by a drastic reduction of cultivated land and exorbitant increase of cultivated land dedicated to extensive cattle ranches. The peasants have resisted this situation, and are organising themselves and proposing policies and instruments so that access to land will be guaranteed and their means of production protected.

### **The mandate of the Emergency Network**

To identify defenders of human rights of the peasants with a subversive guerrilla is against the fundamental freedom and seeks to repress the peasants' struggle for land and for a family-based agriculture that guarantee economic and social rights of the rural population. Colombia is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and is therefore obliged to respect, protect and fulfil these rights of its whole population. By virtue of these obligations of international public law, the Colombian State must adopt measures to guarantee human rights of the peasants, the blacks and the indigenous population of Colombia.

**End of the Emergency Network: January 20, 2004**

### **Addressees:**

Dr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez Presidente de la República Carrera 8 n. 7-26 Palacio de Nariño Santafé de Bogotá Colombia Fax: +57 1 286 7434/6842	Copies to: Dr. Francisco Santos Vicepresidente de la Republica Calle 7, no. 654, piso 3 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia FAX: + 57 1-337 1351	C.N.I.  fensuagrocut@hotmail.com
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### **Translation of proposed letter:**

Mr. President,

I have received worrying information about the violence carried out by the state and paramilitary forces against the Colombian peasant organisations that has resulted in killings, detentions, and displacement of peasants, blacks and indigenous people. On November 11, five peasant leaders - RICARDO ESPEJO, MARCO ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ, GERMAN BERNAL, and JOSE CESPEDES - were massacred in the Municipality of Cajamarca. Moreover, I have received information about the detention of more than eighty leaders in the Municipality of Cartagena del Chairá, department of Caquetá. These are only some examples in a series of killings and detentions that have taken place.

This wave of violence is a result of the call for a "secure and democratic policy" by the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez. The government has promoted massive detentions of peasants, punishing and condemning in an arbitrary way and violating the right of the leaders of the peasants, blacks and indigenous people. The Colombian authorities carry out campaigns to discredit and criminalise peasant organisations, and to associate them with subversion in order to legitimise the brutal repression by the state forces and the paramilitary groups.

To identify defenders of human rights of the peasants with subversive guerrillas is against the fundamental freedom and seeks to repress the peasants' struggle for land and for a family based agriculture that guarantee the economic and social rights of the rural population. Colombia is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and is therefore obliged to respect, protect and fulfil these rights of its whole population. By virtue of these obligations of international public law, the Colombian State ought to adopt measures to guarantee these rights.

As a person working internationally for the human right to feed oneself, I would like to ask you to take necessary measures to:

- put an end to the wave of violence and criminalisation carried out by the state and the paramilitary groups against the peasant movements, blacks and indigenous;
- free all arbitrary detained persons;
- order the investigation and the punishment of those responsible for these actions;
- respect and protect the communities of the peasants, the blacks and the indigenous people and guarantee the work of the social organisations as well as the human rights;
- open up a platform for dialogue and seek for a political solution to the social problems in the rural areas of Colombia, and abandon the politics of militarisation of agrarian issues.

Please, keep me informed about the measures taken in this respect.

Sincerely,

**Please inform FIAN about any response to your letters**

Dr. Alvaro Uribe Vélez

PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA DE COLOMBIA

Palacio de Nariño

Carrera 8 n. 7-26

Palacio de Nariño

Santafé de Bogotá - Colombia

Excelentísimo Señor Presidente,

recibí informaciones preocupantes sobre la violencia estatal y paraestatal en contra de las organizaciones agrarias colombianas que ha tenido como consecuencia asesinatos, detenciones y el desplazamiento de mujeres, campesinos, negros e indígenas. Una masacre fue perpetrada el pasado 11 de noviembre en el municipio de Cajamarca, asesinando a cinco líderes campesinos, entre ellos RICARDO ESPEJO, MARCO ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ, GERMAN BERNAL, JOSE CESPEDES. Además, recibí información sobre la detención de mas de ochenta líderes en el municipio de Cartagena del Chairá, departamento del Caquetà. Estos son solamente algunos ejemplos de la serie de asesinatos y detenciones que han ocurrido.

La ola de violencia es resultado de la llamada "política de seguridad democrática" de su gobierno. Dicha política ha promovido detenciones masivas de campesinos, penalizando y condenando de forma arbitraria y violando el derecho al debido proceso a los líderes campesinos, negros e indígenas. Las autoridades colombianas hacen campañas de difamación y criminalización de las organizaciones agrarias, buscando asociarlas a la subversión, estimulando y preparando el camino para la represión brutal de las fuerzas estatales y los grupos paramilitares.

Identificar a los defensores de los derechos humanos de los campesinos con guerrilleros o subversivos atenta contra las libertades fundamentales y busca reprimir la lucha campesina por la tierra y una agricultura familiar campesina que garantice los derechos económicos y sociales de la población rural. Colombia es Estado Parte de los Pactos Internacionales de Derechos Humanos y, por ende, está obligado a respetar, proteger y garantizar estos derechos a toda a su población. En virtud de esta obligación de derecho público internacional, el Estado colombiano debe adoptar medidas que aseguren el disfrute pleno de todos los derechos.

Como persona que trabaja a nivel internacional por el derecho humano a alimentarse quisiera solicitarle que tome todas las medidas necesarias para

- acabar la escalada de violencia y criminalización adelantada por fuerzas estatales y paraestatales en contra de los movimientos campesinos, negros y indígenas;
- liberar a todas las personas detenidas arbitrariamente;
- ordenar la investigación y el castigo de los responsables de estas acciones;

- respetar y proteger las comunidades campesinas, negras y indígenas y garantizar el trabajo de las organizaciones sociales y de derechos humanos;
- abrir espacios de diálogo y de solución política a los problemas sociales del campo en Colombia, y abandonar la política de militarización de la cuestión agraria.

Por favor, manténgame informado de las medidas que tome a este respecto.

Atentamente,

cc.: Vicepresidente, Dr. Francisco Santos