

**Question for written answer E-010761/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Protecting farmers against state repression in Colombia

For several weeks, thousands of farmers have been protesting throughout Colombia against policies implemented by the country's government and the free trade agreements concluded with, among others, the United States. They have also been calling for better living standards and for labour laws to be observed. A number of other sectors, such as healthcare, transport and mining (both artisanal and traditional), have lent their backing to these demands. According to Parliament's Resolution of 13 June 2013 on the conclusion of the Trade Agreement between the European Union and Colombia and Peru, 'failure to respect human rights and democratic principles would constitute a "material breach" of the TA which, under public international law, could give rise to the adoption of appropriate measures'.

Since the beginning of the protests, the farmers have been the subject of a smear campaign by the authorities and accused of acting on behalf of FARC. Protesters have seen their freedom of expression violated and been subjected to assaults by and direct threats from the security forces. In a violent crackdown at least four farmers were shot dead by the Colombian Army and hundreds of protesters were jailed – more than 500 according to the Prosecutor-General's office. No information has been released about their state of health – either physical or mental – or moves to charge them or put them on trial.

- Is the Commission aware of the serious violations of the human rights of farmers, indigenous peoples and trade unionists that have been committed since the protests started? How does it intend to respond to these blatant violations of freedom of expression and the freedom to protest, as well as the arbitrary detention of more than 500 people?
- In its action plan for the period 2010-2014, which was submitted to the EU on 26 October 2012, the Colombian Government stressed the importance of investigating crimes committed against civilians and of protecting ordinary Colombians and vulnerable groups, such as farmers, trade unionists and indigenous peoples. How does the Commission plan to respond to the demands made by the farmers since the protests started and to the violent crackdown unleashed by the Colombian State and its armed forces?