



Washington, D.C. | Lima | Chiang Mai | Yangon

Neils Christensen
CEO LEGO Group
Aastvej 1
DK-7190 Billund
Denmark

Dear Mr. Christensen:

We write to express our concern regarding the marketing partnership between LEGO and Chiquita Brands. Given Chiquita's admitted history of funding Colombian paramilitary death squads, we do not believe that the company represents the positive values associated with the LEGO brand and products. We therefore urge LEGO to condemn Chiquita's conduct and meet with the family members of those killed by these paramilitaries, and convene a public forum as a first step toward a thorough human rights screening process prior to entering into future marketing partnerships.

Between 1997 and 2004 Chiquita paid \$1.7 million to the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* or AUC, a paramilitary group that committed mass atrocities during Colombia's civil war, including the kidnap and murder of parents in front of their young children. The violence of the AUC has been thoroughly documented by international and Colombian human rights organization and by the United States government, which placed the AUC on its list of banned terrorist organizations. Chiquita admitted making these payments, and in 2007 was convicted of a U.S. federal crime for doing so, paying a fine of US\$25 million.¹

The pursuit of justice for these crimes continues. Just last September, Colombian prosecutors charged 13 Chiquita executives for their role in the illegal paramilitary financing scheme.² And, despite paying a fine to the U.S. Government, Chiquita has yet to provide any remedies to the families of the victims of the violence it funded.

¹ U.S. Dep't of Justice, "Chiquita Brands International Pleads Guilty to Making Payments to a Designated Terrorist Organization And Agrees to Pay \$25 Million Fine" (Mar. 19, 2007), at https://www.justice.gov/archive/opa/pr/2007/March/07_nsd_161.html.

² UPI, "Colombia charges 13 ex-Chiquita executives for financing death squads" (Sept. 3, 2018), at <https://www.upi.com/Colombia-charges-13-ex-Chiquita-executives-for-financing-death-squads/3501535934661/>.



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Our organization currently represents several hundred of these family members, whose loved ones were brutally murdered by AUC units funded by Chiquita. Chiquita has denied all responsibility for the violence that its payments to the AUC helped facilitate and is even now seeking to intimidate victims involved in our litigation. The victims' lawsuit in U.S. court is scheduled for trial in October of this year.

For people around the world, LEGO's products are a symbol of fun, creativity, and childhood happiness. As you know, LEGO is one of the most positively-regarded brands in the world, placing #1 on the 2017 Global RepTrak survey by Reputation Institute, and we know that you have worked hard to build a reputation as an ethical, responsible corporation.

Unfortunately, we believe that Chiquita's brand now represents the polar opposite: violence, death, and evasion of responsibility. Victims who, as children, literally watched as their parents were murdered in front of them, by terrorists funded by Chiquita, will now see the banana company's brand in a family movie from a beloved toymaker.

We understand that the LEGO Group has likely accepted money from Chiquita for its marketing partnership. We do not seek that you break any contracts with the company. However, given the danger to LEGO's own brand, we ask that you:

- Swiftly condemn Chiquita's actions, including its failure to accept responsibility;
- Meet with victims of Chiquita-funded violence in Colombia;
- Convene one or more public forums in Colombia, the United States, and/or Denmark to begin a process of developing procedures to ensure that marketing partnerships are subject to rigorous ethical standards; and
- To the extent that your marketing contract with Chiquita restricts your ability to do any of the above, release the terms of that contract.

We wish to see LEGO retain its position as a leading brand associated with ethical behavior and corporate responsibility.

Sincerely,

Marco Simons, EarthRights International General Counsel



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