Against all Odds
The Deadly Struggle of Land Rights Leaders in Colombia

U.S. Office on Colombia
connecting civil society to policymakers
Against all Odds:
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Since 2002 over 50 leaders\(^1\) of internally displaced communities have been assassinated due to their efforts to return to their stolen or abandoned lands or, in the case of Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders, to protect their collective territorial rights. Twenty land rights leaders have been killed since the beginning of the Santos administration alone.\(^2\)

The struggle over the control and use of land in Colombia has produced massive, systematic and generalized human rights violations. More than 5 million people - representing more than 10% of Colombia’s population - have been internally displaced in the last three decades. During that same period of time, displaced communities have suffered illegal processes of usurpation of or been forced to abandon more than 8 million hectares of land,\(^3\) which represents more than 12% of the agricultural land in Colombia.

The vast majority of these lands have fallen into the hands of third parties and front men for the illegal armed groups that have legalized the process of usurpation through spurious proceedings,\(^4\) many times in liaison with local and national government agencies. This illegal usurpation has benefited human rights violators, agro-industrial business and local and national politicians.

Land usurpation in Colombia has been facilitated not only through the use of violence by legal and illegal armed actors, but also by the fact that many people living in rural areas of Colombia do not have legal title to their land. According to the Minister of Agriculture, Juan Camilo Restrepo, 40% of rural property in the country does not have formal titling.\(^5\) Indeed the lack of titles, in addition to local corruption, and to the violence generated by legal and illegal armed groups that have a strategic or commercial interest in the land, has facilitated the process of usurpation of the lands of hundreds of thousands of Colombian rural families.

However, despite these difficulties, communities around the country have formed local organizations to demand that the Colombian
government not only restitute their lands but also protect their communities. Unfortunately, the security conditions these organizations work in are shocking. For example, nine leaders from the Foundation New Sunrise that represent more than 10,000 victims of forced displacement from 16 different departments have been killed since 2002. Furthermore, threats and attacks against the Foundation continue. Carlos Sabogal, a leader from the organization in the Tolima department, stated; “I have suffered three assassination attempts, the only protection that I have is a cell phone and a bullet proof vest”. Another emblematic case that has received widespread international attention is that of the Afro-Colombian communities of Jiguamiandó and Curvaradó in the Chocó department. In the last six years, nine of its leaders have been assassinated due to their efforts to recover their land usurped by paramilitaries in connection with palm oil companies. Despite the Colombian government’s restitution policy for communities, under which they ordered these oil companies evicted, the communities have not been able to return due to threats and attacks against them.

Of great concern is the fact that many of these leaders did not have protection measures from the Colombian government despite the imminent risk they ran and despite having requested them on several occasions.

This was the case for Hernando Perez and Albeiro Valdez, both assassinated last year after being denied protection measures by the Ministry of Interior when their level of risk was deemed to be “ordinary”. Hernando was assassinated four months after Albeiro and was part of the same restitution process. Even after Albeiro’s death, Hernando’s risk assessment was not reviewed.

The Ministry of the Interior has a protection program for defenders and social leaders at risk, which is extremely important. However, it must be thoroughly reviewed with input from human rights organizations, defenders and social leaders to assess where the program is failing; as it failed for Hernando and Albeiro and many others like them.

In addition to the threats and attacks coming from illegal armed actors, leaders of the displaced population and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities have to face stigmatizations and baseless prosecutions coming from government officials and members of the armed forces, who in several instances work in liaison with legal and illegal actors that have a commercial or strategic interest in the land.
The National Round Table on Guarantees for Human Rights Defenders regarding Land has reported that, “[stigmatizations, in many instances have the objective of shaping the public’s opinion against social leaders and de-legitimizing their work. These stigmatizations are the first step towards the initiation of baseless prosecutions, assassinations, threats and attacks.” This is the case of the Federation of Agriculture and Mining of the Sur de Bolívar region which has been actively opposing the Kedala mining company’s attempt to enter their territory. Stigmatizations have led to increased threats and attacks against the Federation. Indeed the Federation has suffered not only the assassination of one of its members in 2006, allegedly by members of the Nueva Granada Battalion, but also the arrest and persecution of its members by the same battalion. As the Federation reports, the battalion has been very active in discrediting them by accusing their leaders of being guerilla militants who oppose “progress”, referring to the Kedala company’s desire to mine in their territory.

The report of the National Round Table also states that they have documented several instances in which local authorities have made public comments affirming that the associations and leaders who defend their land from foreign investment are “opposing development”. For example, on a public radio program last February, the Mayor of the municipality of Sabana de Torres in Santander called the leader of the Agricultural Association of Santander, Cesar Augusto Tamayo, a terrorist who supported illegal armed actors and accused him of promoting illegal land grabbing. Threats against Cesar Augusto increased after the program aired.

Despite the new administration’s commitment to respect and protect the work of human rights defenders including land leaders, the stigmatizations by members of the armed forces and public officials continue, as do baseless prosecutions against defenders. It is imperative that this commitment is translated into effective policies that include disciplinary and penal actions against those public officials who endanger the lives of human rights defenders through stigmatizations and baseless prosecutions.

The Colombian Congress has recently approved the Victim’s Law, which seeks to repair the rights of the victims of the armed conflict, including victims of forced displacement. The law establishes the restitution of land as the primary means to repair the rights of the displaced population. While we think that the Victims Law is a very important step forward in trying to repair the rights of the displaced population, the law must be accompanied by a comprehensive individual and collective protection program for the leaders and the communities returning to the land as mandated in the law. It is imperative that the communities and their leaders, as well as the organizations that represent them, are able to actively participate in the design and implementation of such a protection program so that it can respond to the specific needs of each community throughout the country.

The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, Christian Salazar, affirmed at the event “For the Right to Life and Land Restitution” that “the land issue in Colombia has been at the center of violent conflicts... therefore the protection for victims that are leading land restitution processes, as well as the organizations that
accompany them should have the same priority as the restitution process in itself, because above all, it is the duty and responsibility of the State to protect their lives”. 12

Since President Santos took office in August 2010, 20 leaders of displaced communities have been killed. This clearly shows that the process of restitution will face fierce opposition and is likely to lead to a surge in violence in the country. It is imperative that before moving forward with the restitution process that the Colombian government designs and implements a rigorous protection program that takes into consideration recommendations from displaced communities and the organizations that work with them. This program should ensure communities the necessary conditions for them to be able to return to and remain on their land. If these conditions are not met, the process of restitution will fail and the communities will be faced with future displacement.

Below are the cases of 20 land rights leaders who have been assassinated during President Santos’ administration—two of whom had their wives and children assassinated along with them. The vast majority of these leaders had requested protection measures from the Colombian government. All of them, like the members of the Foundation New Sunrise, had multiple threats against their lives. All of the threats were disregarded by public officials and all were subsequently killed for demanding their right to live and cultivate their land, for protecting their ancestral rights to culture and territory and for demanding their right to live on. We dedicate this report to their memory.

Father José Reinel Restrepo Idárraga
Killed September 1, 2011

Father José Reinel had been instrumental in helping the communities of the municipality of Marmato in the department of Caldas to oppose the open pit mining project that would have resulted in the forced displacement of the communities living in the area.

The Canadian company Medoro has had permits to exploit the gold mines found in the area since 2009. The company has met with opposition from local communities, as the project not only will have negative environmental impacts but will also generate forced displacement. Father José had led opposition to the mining project, denouncing the threats and abuses suffered by the community. Father José had traveled to Bogotá to meet with government officials the week prior to his assassination to report these abuses. Upon his return to Marmato, he was shot and killed by unidentified men.
Carmen Fuentes
Killed July 5, 2011

Carmen Fuentes was from the indigenous reservation of Porvenir la Fe, a community comprised mostly of displaced families, in the municipality of Montelíbano in Córdoba. She hoped to become a council member for the municipality in the upcoming October elections. She was killed the morning of July 5 in her own home, by unidentified men who shot her twice.

Carmen had been denouncing the presence of illegal armed groups which were pressuring the communities to leave the reservation. The community was constantly pressured by legal and illegal actors due to their economic interest in the region’s gold mines. Two other members of the community were killed the same week Carmen was assassinated. A member of the successor paramilitary group “Los Urabeños” was arrested the same day of the shooting.

Antonio Mendoza
Killed June 30, 2011

Antonio Mendoza was the leader of the Association of Displaced Communities of the Municipalities of San Onofre and Montes de María in the department of Sucre. He was also part of the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) and the only council member from the Alternative Democratic Party (Polo Democrático Alternativo) in the department. At the time of his assassination, Antonio was leading the return of displaced communities in the region.

As part of his work as council member, Antonio was instrumental in the development of two housing programs for displaced communities. The programs were New San Onofre and Puerto Bravo. He was shot and killed on a Friday night while in the company of family and friends. The police made an arrest shortly after the assassination took place, but investigations continue.
Martha Gaibao
Killed April 29, 2011

Martha Gaibao was leading the process of land restitution and return of 100 families to the La Jagua farm in the municipality of Ayapel, Córdoba, when she was gunned down by unidentified men.

La Jagua was titled to Martha and the other 100 families by the Colombian government. However, these families were not able to take possession of the land due to the presence of unidentified armed men who patrolled the farm and threatened the returning community.

When the threats started, the president of the Displaced Association had to flee the region and the rest of the families were forcibly displaced to a slum in the municipality of Apartada. Martha, however, refused to give up the fight for her land and stayed.

Prior to her assassination, the Ombudsman's office had issued a report detailing the high risk that Martha and the other families displaced in Apartada ran. The report recommended the government to create a collective protection program for Martha and other members of the association as well as for the entire community. However, the protection program was never implemented and Martha was assassinated on April 29, 2011.
Nayibis Maria Centeno de la Cruz
Killed April 11, 2011

Nayibis was the legal representative of the Displaced Association of La Mesa and was part of the Departmental Working Group for the Strengthening of the Displaced Population of Cesar Department. “She was watching TV and my little sister was in her room, when the man that killed my mom entered the house through the patio and shot her four times,” stated Frank Payares Centeno, Nayibis’ older son.

Nayibis had been leading the collective process to reclaim land that was taken from her and the other families from La Mesa. The land was illegally taken over by the paramilitary group under the command of “Jorge 40”, who has subsequently been extradited to the United States on drug charges. The lands were titled to third parties by “Jorge 40”.

Eder Verbel Rocha
Killed March 23, 2011

The Verbel Rocha family has suffered assassination threats, intimidations and forced displacement as a consequence of their ownership of the farm known as Puerto Colombia in the municipality of San Onofre, Sucre. Armed groups, mainly paramilitaries, have used violence to forcefully displace many families in the region.

Eder Verbel Rocha was gunned down on March 23 on his way to the farm, while in the company of his son and his brother. His brother escaped and his son hid while he watched his father being hit several times with the butt of the gun.

Eder is the second MOVICE leader killed in the Sucre region in the last two years. In May 2010, Rogelio Martinez of MOVICE was killed while leading a process of land restitution in Sucre. Eder’s brother Guillermo Verbel Rocha was also killed six years ago. The police captured a suspect in Eder’s assassination but investigations continue.
David de Jesús Góez
Killed March 23, 2011

David de Jesus was a farmer from Tulapas in the department of Antioquia. He, along with over 100 families was forced to leave and sell his lands to front men of paramilitaries under the command of Salvatore Mancuso. David de Jesus then joined the organization Forging Future and led the process to recover 20,000 hectares of land that were stolen from the community of Tulapas. David was shoot five times at broad daylight by unidentified men.

During the Justice and Peace process hearings, Salvatore Mancuso confessed to having forced the farmers to sell their lands, including David de Jesus’s farm El Descanso. David de Jesus agreed to become a witness against Tulapas Investment, the company that was allegedly created by the paramilitary boss to administer the lands. Soon after David became a witness in the case, threats against him increased to the point that David asked for protection measures from the Colombian government. However, his request was never met. After David’s murder, the case against Tulapas Investment came to a halt. The remaining families are still waiting for their land to be returned. David was the ninth leader of Forging Future who has been killed.

Andrés Alfonso Arenas Buelvas and the brothers Yon Nel y José Alfonso Delgado Villamil
Disappeared December 24, 2010, found January 10

Andrés Alfonso, Yon Nel and José Alfonso were part of the National Working Group on Land in Tolima department. They also belonged to the Foundation New Sunrise, a national organization of internally displaced persons from different regions of the country. They were reported missing in December 2010 and their bodies found in January 2011.

After Andrés, Yon Nel and José were displaced from the area of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta by paramilitaries of the Bloque Tayrona group, they moved to Tolima, where they acquired a piece of land and joined the Foundation New Sunrise. Through their work with the foundation, they began helping 73 families to recover their lands in Santa Teresa. After their bodies were found, the FARC guerrillas admitted responsibility for the killings and declared all the members of Foundation military objectives. The Foundation has also received threats from Los Rastrojos and Aguilas Negras, paramilitary successor groups.

Andrés, Yon Nel and José’s bodies were found with several gunshot wounds in the river Santa Rosa in the municipality of Libano.
Óscar Mausa
Killed November 24, 2010

Oscar Mausa, along with 240 other families, was displaced in 1996-97 from lands in Blanquicet, Antioquia by paramilitary groups. After suffering further hardships in Medellín, Oscar relocated to San Juan Nepomuceno in the department of Bolívar, where he began his quest to recover the land taken from him and the other Blanquicet families.

Oscar was the leader of the Blanquicet Cooperative of Agricultural Workers, which sought to recover land stolen from them. In 2005, they secured a judicial order that returned their lands, which Oscar was instrumental in achieving. He was serving as a witness against the paramilitary boss of the region known as “55,” who was believed to be behind the violent takeover of lands in Blanquicet. Due to the increasing threats against him, the Inter-American Court granted Oscar precautionary measures in September 2006, and the Ministry of Interior had included Oscar in its protection program in 2008. A day before his assassination, Oscar was called by the Attorney General’s office in the region to ratify his testimony against “55.” He was killed on November 24, 2010 on the farm La Poza del Guamo. His hands were bound and his body showed signs of torture.

Elizabeth Silva Aguilar
Killed October 30, 2010

The Association of Displaced and Homeless Villas de Giradot, located in a slum in the capital city of Bucaramanga, department of Santander, has been subject of continuous threats and attacks since its inception. In June 2010, three of its members were killed, and a week before Elizabeth’s assassination, a grenade was launched against the homes of some of its members. Elizabeth was the president of the association and the fourth member to be killed.

Elizabeth was instrumental in preventing the eviction of displaced families from the Villas de Giradot slum, and was leading the process of legalization of the lot titles where these families have built their new homes. Paramilitary groups that operate in the area are believed to be responsible for the crime.
Ana María Moreno was the founder and legal representative of the Asti Community Council and was a member of the Coordinating Community Council of Acandí in the department of Chocó. In her role as legal representative, she fought to protect the collective territorial rights of the Afro-Colombian communities in the region from foreign investors that came to the region in search of gold and other minerals. She was gunned down days after the government had decided to revoke the licenses for gold and mineral exploration in the community’s collective lands. She was shot three times while she was bathing in the Asti river.

As a result of the enactment of Decree 1745 of 1995, the Colombian government titled 10,400 hectares of land to the Asti Community Council. The titles were disputed by various local and non-local actors who claimed they had ownership, creating conflicts that included the use of violence, intimidation and threats against the Afro-Colombian families living in the titled lands.

To make matters worse, the Institute for Geology and Mining (Ingeominas) granted licenses to the companies Gold Plata and Grupo Bullet to explore 1,600 hectares of land within the Asti Community Council’s lands. The expectations of a gold rush attracted an influx of companies and investors, increasing the value of the land. Shortly afterwards, paramilitaries arrived, threatening local community leaders. In a meeting held between the government, Ingeominas and the community councils in September 2010, the council was informed that the mining licenses to explore in the area were revoked. Subsequently the community council received threats including a phone call in which they could hear the sound of a chainsaw and a voice threatening to cut members of the council into pieces. Days later Ana Maria was killed and three more families from the council have been displaced.

The rest of the families are still waiting for a response from the government regarding their precarious security conditions.

Ana Maria leaves behind her husband and ten children.
José Omar Salazar, Deisy Yasno and Lenin Romario Falla
Killed October 11, 2010

José Omar, a member of the Foundation New Sunrise, had been forcefully displaced from the Cauca region. After battling legal and bureaucratic hurdles for many years, the Institute of Rural Development (Incoder) provided land titles to José and his wife Deisy and three other families for a farm known as El Retiro in the municipality of El Cairo, department of Valle del Cauca.

One year after the land was returned, a member of one of the families was attacked by unidentified armed men, forcing the family to be displaced for the second time. José Omar, Deisy and her son Lenin stayed on the land. A year later, unidentified armed men returned to the farm and killed José Omar, Deisy and Lenin, who was 16 years old. The remaining families live with fear that the violence will return.

They have not received any protection measures from the government.

Edgar Bohórquez Palma
Killed September 24, 2010

Edgar had been fleeing from violence since his first wife was killed in the department of Meta. He relocated to the department of Arauca in the municipality of Saravena where the Colombian government provided him and other families with land to compensate for the farm that he was forced to abandon back in Meta. When paramilitaries came to the region, he was forced to leave his land again.

In 2005 Edgar led the Association for Victims of Forced Displacement and created the Association of United Displaced Communities of Saravena. Through these organizations, Edgar began his quest to recover what the Colombian government had already titled to him and other families. Edgar received multiple threats against his life and that of his family. He reported the threats to the Ministry of Interior and requested protection measures. The measures never arrived.

The day he was killed Edgar was traveling in a motorcycle, when he was shot his four-year-old son was with him and was wounded. Edgar leaves behind his second wife and four children.
September 21, 2010 was a day of celebration in the municipality of Turbó, in the Urabá region. In a public event, the Minister of Agriculture Juan Camilo Restrepo handed over 34 land titles to families who had been displaced by paramilitary violence. Among those who received land was Hernando Pérez. Hernando was the leader for the Association of Land and Assets Restitution of Urabá.

He represented 25 families who were displaced from the neighboring municipality Necocli. While he was heading home after the restitution ceremony, Hernando was assassinated by an unknown assailant. His body showed multiple wounds made with different objects. Alongside his body there were four bullets, even though his corpse did not have gunshot wounds. The community believes that they were left as a message to the remaining leaders, one bullet for each of the four leaders who had been at the ceremony.

Hernando is the second leader of this particular restitution process who has been killed. Just four months earlier, Albeiro Valdes was killed by unidentified armed men who left his body on the same road as Hernando’s. Both leaders had requested protection from the Ministry of Interior and the police, but had been denied because their risk assessment was rated as “ordinary.”

The land that Hernando and Albeiro fought and died for has been returned to the perpetrators. According to Colombian news magazine Semana, Albeiro’s 35 hectares are now in the hands of a well-known front man for the paramilitaries, and Hernando’s 24 hectares are under the name of the step-son of the paramilitary boss in the region.
Sara Rodriguez Gonzalez:
Killed September 17, 2010

Sara Rodriguez had been displaced from the department of Arauca in 2007. She arrived in Cúcuta, where she relocated in the slum No 6 “Torremolinos.”

Sara was working to obtain titles for several lots where displaced families, including her own, had built their new homes. During the process of legalization, she received multiple threats that were reported to the authorities, but she never received any type of protection, and the threats were never investigated. She was killed while she was leaving her home on the morning of September 17th. The day she was killed, the government had finished the process of purchase and legalization of the lots in favor of Sara and the other families.

Sara leaves behind three children.

Ramiro Inampuez and María Elena Galindez
Killed August 28, 2010

Ramiro Inampuez and his wife were reported missing on August 26, 2010 by members of the community Guachacal in the department of Nariño. Ramiro and his wife were members of this community, and Ramiro was the former governor of the Guachucal indigenous reserve and had run for senator for the Social Indigenous Alliance (SIA). At the time of his death he was serving as a council member for the SIA in Guachacal. Their bodies were found in El Común, a neighboring town on August 28th.

At the time of his assassination, Ramiro was leading the process of negotiation with the government for the titling of indigenous collective ancestral land in the department of Nariño. Ramiro was also part of the National School of Indigenous Rights, an organization that received multiple threats by unknown actors against its members in the months preceding Ramiro’s and Maria Elena’s assassination.
Beto Ufo woke up at dawn on August 17, 2010 to work on the land that was titled to him and ten other families near the city of Popayán, Cauca by the Colombian government. He was never to be seen alive again.

Beto had been displaced from el Tambo department of Cauca to the city of Popayán where 58,000 displaced families live. At his arrival Beto founded the Organization New Floralia, an organization that gave legal advice to displaced families for their restitution efforts. He was instrumental in the process of restitution that lead to the Colombian government to title the lands to the 10 families that Beto was representing. Due to his work as a social leader and especially after the restitution process, the threats against his life increased to the point that the Colombian government assigned him protection measures. Other leaders of the same community have also been threatened and attacked. For example, Olga Castillo was attacked by a man on a motorbike. Olga worked with Beto in the Departmental Working Group for the Strengthening of the Popayán Displaced Population.

To date the investigation into Beto’s assassination continues without progress in finding the intellectual and material authors of this crime.
Land rights leaders killed during the Santos administration

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To the Colombian Government:

- The Attorney General’s office should carry out timely and effective investigations into the assassinations of the 20 land rights leaders killed in the last year. The Attorney General’s office should also grant priority to the effective investigation of threats and attacks against land rights leaders, returning communities and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. It is imperative that both intellectual and material authors of the assassinations, threats and attacks are brought to justice.

- The Colombian government should act more vigorously towards effectively dismantling paramilitary successor groups, by investigating and prosecuting its members and financial and political backers. It should also suspend, investigate and prosecute members of the armed forces who have been found to collaborate with or tolerate their abuses.

- The Colombian government must ensure effective investigations and prosecutions of public officials and members of the armed forces that are colluding with illegal armed groups and agro-industrial businesses in land usurpation processes and other human rights violations against displaced or retuning communities, or communities that are defending their territorial rights. In the case of the armed forces, the Ministry of Defense must ensure that all cases of human rights abuses committed by members of the armed forces are remitted without delay to the civilian justice system.

- The Ministry of Interior should design and implement - in close consultation with leaders of displaced communities, human rights organizations and defenders and associations of displaced communities - a protection program that is tailored to the needs of the communities, social leaders and human rights defenders leading the restitution processes. Such program must include a gender and minority perspective to address the particular threats that women, Afro-Colombian and indigenous leaders face. This program should also include a periodic evaluation and monitoring process, carried out by the Ministry of Interior along with the beneficiaries, to ensure that the program responds to the changing threats and in the field conditions of the communities.

- As part of this protection plan, the Ministry of Interior should design, in consultation with beneficiaries, an emergency reaction protocol in order to engage
civilian local and regional government authorities, police and military and hold them accountable for their obligations to provide 24-hour, urgent protection to returned and returning communities and land rights leaders. The existing Early Warning System should be strengthened by allowing the Ombudsman’s office or Ministry of the Interior to issue an early warning directly, rather than waiting for approval from the Ministry of Defense.

• The process of return should be accompanied by development and land titling programs that would allow the retuning communities to stay on their lands. The Colombian government should devote resources to build sustainable rural livelihoods, based on the communities’ proposals and with a clear gender and minority perspective. Land titling is essential to ensure the returning communities’ rights and to prevent armed actors and third parties to keep benefiting from violent processes of usurpation.

To the US Government:

• The Department of State must fully implement the Leahy Law with regard to U.S. assistance to Colombia, by suspending assistance to military units and brigades that have links to paramilitary successor groups. The U.S.G must also make clear to the Colombian government that moving forward with the effective dismantling of paramilitary successor groups will be a key factor in considering the continuation or suspension of military assistance.

• The investigation and prosecution of those responsible of not only the assassination of the land rights leaders, but also of some exemplary cases of forced displacement should be a priority within the Department of Justice led-programs with the Colombian Attorney General’s Office.

• The U.S.G. through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) should support and provide for the process of consultation, accompaniment and evaluation needed to build the protection programs for retuning communities.

To Academia and Civil Society:

• U.S and Colombian civil society groups should make the protection for internally displaced communities and their leaders a priority in their agendas, and mobilize in a collaborative manner to ensure international and national attention on this issue.
• The media and the academia, by focusing attention on this issue through research, seminars and reporting, could ensure that land rights leaders and the communities that they represent receive much needed attention by Colombian and U.S society in general, and pressure both the U.S. and Colombian government to provide the protection needed by the leaders and the retuning communities.

Written by Diana Arango U.S. Office on Colombia (diana@usofficeoncolombia.org)
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Endnotes
1 CODHES lists 49 leaders that have been killed between March 2002 and June 2011. The US Office on Colombia during the process of writing this report has reviewed and added names to this list.
2 At the time of publishing the report another land rights leader was killed. Jairo Antonio Valera, leader of a process of return in the department of Antioquia. With Jairo Antonio, the total number of leaders that have been killed during the Santos Administration is 21.
4 Spurious proceedings can include: forced land sales; forced transfer of land titles; and titling of abandoned lands in favor of front men and third parties by corrupt local and national government agencies.
8 The protection program was created by the Colombian government to offer security measures for people at risk. The program offers protection to trade unionists, human rights defenders, journalists and land rights leaders, by providing them with armed cars, bullet proof vests, cell phones, transportation subsidies and in some cases relocation expenses.
9 The National Round Table on Guarantees for human rights defenders is a process that started under the Uribe administration in which national and regional human rights organizations met with officials from the government to discuss the security conditions for human rights defenders and social leaders. The meetings were cancelled shortly after they began. The Santos Administration along with human rights organizations decided to re-open the working groups and to include new concerns such as: impunity, women, minorities and land restitution.
10 Mesa Nacional de Garantías: Mesa Temática sobre situación de Defensores, Defensoras, Víctimas y Organizaciones que reclaman sus derechos a la Tierra, los Territorios y la Restitución. April 2011.
11 En la Serranía no brilla el oro http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/cuadernillo/actualidad/articuloimpreso-serrania-no-brilla-el-oro
12 Quoted in Mesa Nacional de Garantías Mesa Temática sobre situación de Defensores, Defensoras, Víctimas y Organizaciones que reclaman sus derechos a la Tierra, los Territorios y la Restitución. April 2011
13 Defensor del Pueblo dice que los homicidios de líderes de tierras son una forma de presión armada para impedir la restitución de predios en esa región del país http://www.defensoria.org.co/red/?item=0301&sec=03&ts=28&n=128
15 The recommendations were developed in a collective effort by US civil society organizations.