



Amnesty International and Oxfam demand justice for peasant families of Curuguaty

Following the judgement passed yesterday by the court in charge of the case in which it declared eleven peasant farmers guilty, both men and women, Amnesty International and Oxfam express their concern over the lack of investigation into the deaths of a further eleven peasant farmers during the violent eviction in Curuguaty, Paraguay in 2012.

Mexico City, 12 July 2016. - Seventeen people, six police officers and eleven peasant farmers, were killed during the violent eviction of the land known as Marina kue in the region of Canindeyú on 15 June 2012. However in the public oral trial on this eviction, concluded yesterday, only the deaths of the police officers were addressed.

Amnesty International, Oxfam and other local and international organizations have expressed their concern on different occasions over the refusal of the General Prosecutor to investigate the deaths of the eleven peasant farmers. “The General Prosecutor has not provided a credible explanation as to the reasons why they did not investigate these deaths, or responded to allegations that the crime scene was tampered with or the allegations of torture and other mistreatment of peasant farmers in police custody”, noted Erika Guevara Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International.

In accordance with international standards by which Paraguay is bound, the authorities are obliged to carry out independent and impartial investigations into all reports of human rights violations, and to ensure that the victims and their families have access to integral reparations once the damages are confirmed. In this respect the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has reaffirmed that in cases of deprivation of life, member states are obliged to effectively investigate the events, particularly when state agents are involved, as failure to do so would create an environment in which such events could be subsequently repeated.

According to information from local human rights organizations, in the past 25 years at least 115 leaders and members of peasant farmer organizations have been murdered or disappeared in relation to disputes over equal distribution of land. “In Paraguay, 1.6% of the landowners are in possession of 80% of the agricultural and cattle land, which has caused thousands of organized peasant farmers to demand the effective implementation of the land reform acknowledged in the Constitution of Paraguay”, indicated Simon Ticehurst, Oxfam’s director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

On numerous occasions Oxfam, together with local and international organizations, has requested that the government hand over plots of farmland to the peasant families affected by the land grabbing in Curuguaty. “To date these demands have not been met and the peasant farmers remain without access to the land”, Ticehurst advised. According to reports published by Oxfam, although the small peasant farmsteads account for 8 out of every 10 agricultural holdings in the country, their total area does not occupy more than 4.3% of the country’s farmland.

Inhabitants of the area, several of them victims and family members of victims of the violent eviction in 2012, have been demanding use of state land within the framework of the land reforms for over ten years. Meanwhile, a soya cultivation company has illegitimately registered the land, according to a report from the Paraguayan Human Rights Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay, Codehupy*).

In the public oral trial, the only legal proceedings implemented to investigate the events of the violent eviction in Curuguaty in 2012, eleven peasant farmers have been charged with murder, criminal association and property invasion, with no investigation into the issues of truth and justice in the case of the deaths of the eleven peasant farmers and with no explanation as to the issue of the dispute over the ownership of the land, which is still unresolved in the civil justice field.

Oxfam and Amnesty International urge the Paraguayan authorities to carry out an exhaustive, independent and impartial investigation into all events involving deprivation of life, reports of torture and other mistreatment and the numerous human rights violations committed in the context of the events of June 2012.

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