

COLOMBIA

Colombian Constitutional Court rules in favor of Las Pavas community land-holders

RRN letter [excerpted]

August 11, 2009- sent to the president and vice-president of Colombia

*We are seriously concerned for the welfare and safety of 123 campesino families of the community of Las Pavas, in South Bolívar province. [...] The police entered the community, destroyed seven campesino homes, seized tools [in order to] to displace the 123 families... Large palm oil industries that wish to acquire the land of Las Pavas from the current absentee landlord...have been **threatening families** who have lived and worked the land for the past twelve years.*

RRN letter [excerpted]

April 1, 2011- sent to the Minister of Interior and Justice, Colombia

We urge you to take appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of 123 families who plan to return to their land in Las Pavas. The community has filed administrative and legal recourses to demand that their land be returned to them so that they might support their families. After waiting 19 months for this to be resolved—and enduring harassment and threats during this interim—the families have decided to take the bold step of reestablishing themselves on the land.

GOOD NEWS

“[Families face] violence and harassment from palm company security guards [in daily life]. Team members in Colombia visit Las Pavas regularly, and sometimes are called to come at a moment’s notice when police try to force eviction, or if the company has sent particularly violent representatives—like the recent round of house burnings, threats, and crop-destruction.

We celebrate a Colombian Constitutional Court ruling that denies the palm company the right to the land of Las Pavas! The resistance, of course, continues as we await the company’s response to the non-appealable ruling.”

Christian Peacemaker Teams, October 2015

“This ruling means a lot to us. It means our legal process can now move forward and we can continue to return to the land. This also means the company will need to leave.”
Misael Payares, community leader

This legal ruling would not have happened without the committed struggle of grassroots activists and their partners. Many people put their lives at risk. Some died. CPT-Colombia has been honored to accompany the people of Las Pavas in their struggle. People like IRTF’s RRN members make that accompaniment possible.

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IRTF calls together the people of northeast Ohio to walk in solidarity with oppressed peoples of Central America and Colombia to achieve peace, justice, human rights, and systemic transformation through nonviolence.
www.IRTFcleland.org

