

# COLOMBIA

## International pressure prevents eviction in Curvaradó River basin

Since 2005 members of the InterReligious Task Force, have taken action out of concern for the **safety of the more than 100 residents** of Caracoli in the Curvaradó region of Chocó Department. Threats have been made and carried out by paramilitaries against members of the Afro-Colombian community who have fought to stay on their land. Local authorities have aided in the eviction of the communities. The **Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission** have been working with Afro-descendent communities in the Curvaradó River Basin and Jiguiamando River Basin, Department of Chocó. These communities declared themselves “humanitarian refuge zones,” insisting that all armed groups stay out.

October 15, 2005: **Orlando Valencia, Afro-Colombian community leader from Chocó, disappeared.** Two paramilitaries abducted Orlando, his body was found and identified only from finger prints. Orlando worked in communities where the palm oil business is illegally planting on land held by collective title of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The illegal plantings began after the forced displacement of 13 communities, 111 assassinations and disappearances carried out by the Colombian military, police and paramilitary forces.

May 16, 2006: the Colombian Presidential Program on Human Rights sent an update to IRTF about the steps they have taken in Valencia’s murder case. Feb 17 2006: captured suspect Diomedes near Apartadó, Antioquia. Feb 27: Diomedes ordered detained for charges of aggravated murder. Mar 14: suspect Boxeador was captured in Apartadó; ordered detained on Mar 22 for charges of aggravated murder.

August 25, 2008: **Community leader Enrique Petro** and members of the **Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission** working in the Humanitarian Zone of Andalucia Cano Claro in the Curvarado River Basin, received a telephoned death threat stating: “with or without the army we are going to kill you.” The threat followed a similar call received by the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission threatening, “This is the Black Eagles speaking, It is best if you leave the area, you are being watched, you need to leave right now.”

November 2, 2008: RNN letters were sent in response to the **killing of Walberto Hoyos Rivas**, a leader of the Afro-descendant community in the Curvaradó region, by members of the Black Eagles paramilitary group.

June 11, 2009: The Caracoli community learned that local police were preparing an eviction notice to be served on June 18. This **eviction notice had been ordered by a local judge** despite the central government's repeated recognition that the residents of Caracoli and Jifuamiando legally own their lands and therefore have a right to remain there. The Ministry for the Interior and Justice called on the regional judicial authorities to respect the validity of this land title.

### **Good news: Eviction prevented!**

July 20, 2009: **Members of the Afro-descendant community were not served with the threatened eviction notice** thanks to a Colombian constitutional court ruling and pressure from the international community. The Court ordered the immediate suspension of the eviction notice and called for the protection of the community, which consists of over 100 people. **International pressure played an important part in this decision.**

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