

Three Years Later and Still No Justice for Paraguay Massacre Victims



Asuncion, June 16 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Three years to the day after the June 15, 2012 Curuguatymassacre, in which 11 rural farm workers and six police were killed, justice for the victims has yet to be served. According to Dr. Vicente Morales, attorney for the victims, the court case, which was due to begin June 22nd, has been suspended.

Local *ABC Paraguay* newspaper reports that the trial will take place in July due to a lack of available courtrooms, as defense lawyers called for the case to be moved to the Asuncion Palace of Justice.

Three years ago, some 300 heavily-armed police officers stormed into Marina Kue in the Curuguaty district of Paraguay in an attempt to evict 50 rural farm workers who had occupied the land. The landless workers asserted that the terrain belonged to the state, after former dictator Alfredo Stroessner passed it to its new owner, Blas Riquelme.

The conflict swiftly turned violent, resulting in the deaths of 17 people. The youngest of these, Luciano Ortega, was 18 years old. Reports of torture, mutilations and other human rights abuses have been made.

Then President Fernando Lugo was blamed for the mass-killing, which was subsequently used as pretext to oust him in an “impeachment” marred by a flawed process. Land ownership has long formed the basis for bloody dispute in Paraguay, where the state often acts in the interests of the elite and 80 percent of the land belongs to less than 2 percent of the population, according to the United Nations.

Since June 2014, the oral and public judgment of the 11 farmers accused of crimes related to the incident has failed to happen, as attorneys stalled proceedings with technicalities, while the police enjoy impunity.

Ruben Villalba, Felipe Martinez, Luis Olmedo, Adalberto Castro, Arnaldo Quintana, Nestor Castro, Lucia Agüero, Fani Olmedo and Dolores Lopez Peralta are accused of premeditated homicide, trespassing and criminal association. Alcides Ramon Ramirez and Juan Carlos Tilleria are charged with criminal association and trespassing, while Felip Nery Urbina is accused of perverting the course of justice. Last year, five of the accused went on hunger strike for more than 30 days to demand justice and freedom, but instead were denied visits and punished.

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