

Colombian Campesino Land Defender Assassinated



Bogota, November 21 (RHC)-- Erley Monroy Fierro, director of Ascal-G, one of the most important campesino associations in the eastern Amazonian region, has been assassinated. According to the Foundation for the Defense of Human Rights, Monroy Fierro died in the hospital after his body was discovered on the side of the road near his farm, riddled with bullets.

Since discovering that the government had authorized oil drilling in the region, Monroy Fierro had focused protest efforts on trying to protect the local environment and highlight the damage caused by the oil projects.

In an earlier interview with *Semanariovoz* about his concerns about the drilling, Fierro said: "There are two really important things. The environmental damage is the first, but the other is the damage to the social fabric. We know that the oil companies never come with good things. For one thing, the paramilitaries come behind the oil companies. After that come the psychopaths, the thieves, the rapists, and our culture dies. And the army also does this, so we are afraid."

Monroy Fierro's assassination comes after two FARC rebels were killed earlier in the week by government snipers in the northern Bolivar region, and as concerns rise about the fate of the latest peace agreement, reached last weekend in Cuba between the Colombian government and the FARC rebels.

Both sides have yet to agree on an implementation procedure, but analysts expect the new deal to be voted on in Congress and passed as soon as possible since the agreement has a 12 month period for implementation.

The agreement to cease hostilities is credited with significantly reducing violence in the country, home to the longest-running civil war in the Western Hemisphere.

Colombia's 52-year internal conflict has claimed some 260,000 lives and victimized at least eight million

more Colombians.

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