



Black Communities' Process in Colombia

President Obama's Green Light to FTA is a Red Flag for Afro-Colombians

As President Obama seems to be ready to give a green light to Colombia for the implementation of the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement this weekend, under the guise of improvements in labor conditions and human rights, the Black Communities Process in Colombia (PCN) raises the question: what it will take for the Obama administration to understand the severity of Afro-Colombians' human rights?

Just this year, from January to April, PCN registered ten violent events that have caused the internal displacement of 35 families in Buenaventura; three families in the coast of Cauca Department (Guapi and Timbiqui), in order to escape the forced recruitment of their children by paramilitaries; two leaders disappeared and were later found murder by paramilitaries in Curvarado, Choco; five Afro-Colombians were killed and more than 20 wounded by bombs in Tumaco and Guapi, and the Community Council leaders and internal displaced and women organizations in Cauca continued to receive death threats (16 in total since 2009).

These are just a handful of horrible examples of the egregious human rights violations against Afro-descendant communities and their leaders. Yet we understand that this administration is prepared to proclaim to the world that the human rights situation in Colombia is not an issue anymore. For Afro-Colombians, we are still disproportionately affected by the internal armed conflict in all its manifestations, we are still the most impoverished in the country, we are still military target by all armed forces in urban and rural areas, our lands are still been taken away, we still don't have basic needs and we still don't have any reliable representation at any level of government because the structural discrimination.

While President Obama is in Cartagena, the place where our African ancestors first step foot on after being kidnapped as part of the first trans Atlantic "free trade system" in the Americas, to talk about hopes and future for the continent, we ask, do the African descendant people count?

If in Colombia there are men, women and children dying every day of hunger, sexual violence, targeted killing, lack of health services and victims of the deteriorating economic conditions in urban and rural settlements, why is that the Obama administration discount these realities as serious human rights violations?

Afro-descendants have the same rights as the rest of humanity. And as this administration and others concern with human rights in Colombia focus on the important issues of labor conditions and union organizers rights -we ask- what about Afro-Colombians?

President Obama, the Black Communities' Process exhorts you to abstain from giving a green light to the FTA in Colombia and to acknowledge the red flag that all of those who are committed to protecting human rights have been raising for long time now, particularly in regard to Afro-Colombians.

With our traditional affirmation of life, joy, hope and freedom,

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