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GM SOY BRINGS DEATH & MISERY TO PARAGUAY

In Paraguay less than 2% of the population owns 70% of the land and yet the vast majority of the people live in rural areas. Life has never been easy but now it is becoming intolerable. With government support and corruption rife the multinational agro-chemical & biotechnology companies such as Monsanto, Cargill and Syngenta are moving in and now there are approximately 12 million hectares planted to GM soy. Belarmino Balbuena, leader

of the Movimiento Campesino Paraguayo (Paraguayan Peasant Movement), says that half the conflicts about land involve GM soy production, and they are the most violent conflicts. Thousands of peasants have been expelled from the land and in the east

of the country now form a minority population while Brazilians, Germans and Italians and their heavily armed minders, all employed by the biotechnology companies, form the majority. Since the year 2000 soy monocultures have spread from using 1.1 million hectares to using 2.05 million hectares – that's land that used to produce food for local people. In the past 15 years over 6,000 rural workers have been arrested for protesting against land evictions. Since President Duarte Frutos signed an agreement with the soy producers and the military in 2004, the violence in the evictions has become a continuous practice. The evictions occur without any kind of previous warning. The police act together with the military and paramilitary of the large estate owners and supervised by the district attorney, surprise the peasants at 2-3 a.m., breaking into their houses and arresting all of the family members. There are cases of detentions, beatings and shootings. The women, children and even wounded are detained and there are many cases of lost pregnancies due to beatings during the evictions. The soldiers loot the people's belongings, destroy their houses and their harvests and kill their animals. The evictions not only affect the newly settled, but also sometimes affect the older established communities, including those with legal ties to the land. There the tactic is to offer them money for abandoning their lots, and to arrange a sale of 'the right of use' on behalf of the settled peasant. The families are compensated with money and migrate towards the poorer areas on the outskirts of the cities believing that better opportunities await them. After a few years

these families have lost everything and they either return to increase the long list of landless

people that travel around the country or migrate to other countries to look for work. This sale of land use rights is completely illegal but the people do not know that. The majority of those that buy the land, utilize it to plant soy. They enter with armed guards and agrochemicals. The violence against the neighbours worsens, the people become ill and lose their crops due to fumigations, and in addition are constantly scared by armoured groups and the police. Resistance on behalf of the peasant organizations to the sale of the land use rights is one of

the principal causes of violence in the communities. Direct conflict with the soy producers

happens when the organizations of rural workers oppose the loss of the lots, denounce the irregularity and reoccupy the lots along with other landless families. It is because of this that the organizations of rural workers oppose any type of intrusion of soy in their communities.

International Solidarity with Paraguay

The plans of the government to stimulate the expansion of GM soy monocultures to cover 4 million hectares supposes a frontal attack not only on the rural and indigenous communities but also on the entire future of Paraguay. It is urgent that the international

ISSA Diary

Saturday 16th September, 2006
Organic gardening:What to grow in polytunnels and systems used

This 1 day course will give you the best advice on how to get the most from your polytunnel or raised beds. Held here at Capparoo, with Jo Newton €60 for non-members with the usual discount for our members.

Tuesday 8th August, 2006
Growing for seed-harvesting and saving

A 1 day course here at Capparoo with Frank Bouchier

Saturday 26th August, 2006
Making herbal preparations

A 1 day course with Vivienne Campbell here at Capparoo. A practical guide to making remedies from plants in your garde for the use in the home, includes a herb-gathering /identifying walk.€65 (mems €58.50)

community reacts in the face of this grave human rights violation, sending human rights observers and questioning and pressuring the actions of the government of Nicanor Duarte Frutos.

Disappearances in 2005

October 9. Esteban Hermosilla disappeared on the 9th of October and was found on the 17th of October, 2005 in the district of Curuguaty department of Canindeyú. Esteban was kidnapped, tortured, assassinated and half-buried by the bullies Waldir Presen Da Silva and Wilmar Presen Da Silva from the Joaquín Fernández Martín Ranch. October 20. Eviction, the burning of 20 ranches and the stealing of 2 motorbikes, in the Third of June settlement in the district of Tavai department of Caazapá, where 250 families had been settled for more than 3 years. The eviction was headed by the district attorney Vidal Francia from the district of Caazapá, and accompanied by approximately 50 police. Adriano Medina, 15 years old, disappeared on the 29th of September, 2005 and was found dead on the 18th of October, 2005,

on the property of Ivo José and Douglas Muller. The event happened in the district of Iruña, department of Alto Paraná. September 19th. Two policemen, paid by the owner of a large estate, tried to assassinate Benito Gavilán, leader of his community, "María Antonia," in the district of Mbuyapey, department of Paraguari. Afterwards, they initiated a wave of breakins

against the community in search of the wounded man. It was 3 days before Benito could escape and get to hospital where they found a bullet had shattered his entire eye. June 24. The rural community of Tekojoja in the department of Caaguazú was brutally attacked by police forces. 270 people were removed, 54 houses and harvests were burned, 2 people, Ánel Cristaldo, 20 years old and Leopoldo Torres, 49 years old, were assassinated and 5 others wounded. 130 people, including women and children, were arrested. The eviction happened with the collaboration of the owner of the large soy estate, Opperman and his paramilitary

troops. To this day, the 54 families are still staying in a precarious encampment without any type of support.

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