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For 2nd Anniversary of “Curuguaty Massacre,” New Report Sheds Light on the Criminalization of Peasants and the Right to Land in Paraguay

OAKLAND, California; HEIDELBERG, Germany; ASUNCIÓN, Paraguay, June 18, 2014 – On June 15, 2012, seventeen people—eleven peasant farmers and six police officers—were killed in the rural district of Curuguaty, Paraguay. Now known as the “Curuguaty massacre” the killings took place during a violent eviction carried out by police and prosecutors against families of landless peasants who had occupied a piece of land known as Marina Kue.

A new report based on the findings of an international fact-finding investigation carried out in September 2012 shows evidence of widespread human rights violations, legal irregularities, and a state-sponsored campaign to criminalize peasant movements struggling to access land on which to grow food.

The “Curuguaty massacre” is now recognized as one of the most serious cases of human rights violations in Latin America and an emblematic example of the growing criminalization of peasant struggles for the right to land in the region. It is also a critical case in linking the global trend of “land grabbing” with grabs for political power. Only one week after the massacre, the event was used as a pretext for ousting democratically elected president Fernando Lugo.

Paraguay is one of the countries with the greatest land inequality in the world. Paraguay’s extreme land concentration, combined with the high levels of violence and impunity surrounding the Curuguaty massacre, indicate a severe lack of responsible land governance in Paraguay; an absence of protections for the rights of small and landless farmers; and the use of state repression in the service of the country’s powerful landed elite.

This report—authored by human rights advocacy organization FIAN International and international peasant movement La Vía Campesina—is published by Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy as part of its Land & Sovereignty in the Americas publications series.

The full report is available for free download by visiting <http://foodfirst.org/publication/land-conflicts-paraguay/> and also at the websites of FIAN International (www.fian.org) and La Vía Campesina (www.viacampesina.org)

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