

PCN



Six Reasons Why Afro-Colombian Grassroots Leaders are opposed to the cultivation of Oil Palm, also known as “African Palm,” in Afro-Colombian Territories:

- 1) The spread of Oil Palm cultivation is linked to grave human rights violations, internal displacement, and the killings of Afro-Colombian leaders.
- 2) Oil Palm development is linked to the weakening of territorial and environmental rights of Afro-Colombian communities.
- 3) Afro-Colombian communities were not consulted as to whether or not they agree with the development of Oil Palm plantations in their territories.
- 4) The majority of Afro-Colombians are not benefiting economically from the cultivation of Oil Palm.
- 5) Oil Palm development is connected to new laws and policies that weaken the rights of Afro-Colombians.
- 6) Afro-Colombian communities have developed alternative sustainable development plans for their territories.

We ask that members of the Congressional Black Caucus make the human and territorial rights of Afro-Colombians a priority issue and take action to protect these communities’ rights. In particular, offices should:

- Support the Senate version of the FY07 Foreign Operations bill that conditions aid to Colombia. The Senate version adds a condition on the Colombian armed forces’ respect for the land and property rights of Afro-Colombians. The Senate version also adds a clause to the conditions on paramilitary demobilization requiring that the Colombian government take steps to identify stolen land and other illegal assets and return them to their rightful owners.
- Insist that the Colombian government consult with Afro-Colombian displaced leaders when formulating policies and programs that are targeted for their communities.
- Urge the Colombian government to develop and implement a policy that addresses the protection and humanitarian concerns of Afro-Colombian internally displaced persons. Such a policy should be a “differentiated approach” that targets their special concerns. This policy should also address the needs of persons who are “confined” in their communities and cannot flee within the country to seek protection.
- Closely monitor the paramilitary demobilization process and ensure that the conditions for U.S. assistance to this process are met. In particular, Congressional offices should insist that the financial, political, and military structures of these organizations be dismantled.

- Increase technical assistance and funding to Afro-Colombian internally displaced leaders, communities and their organizations/associations.
- Ensure that USAID establish appropriate screening mechanisms to guarantee that U.S. financing does not support programs that are implemented on stolen Afro-Colombian lands. Also ensure that USAID not encourage or finance projects that support the cultivation of Oil Palm.
- Urge the Colombian government to make the return of land belonging to Afro-Colombian communities a priority. Attention should be based upon the principles of consultation and the rights established for these communities in law 70 of 1993.

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