

The Justice of Peace

By *Francisco Ramirez Cuellar*

The very complexities of this country and of the planet do not make the peace process in Colombia easy. And even less easy achieving justice in the context of the permanently injecting of their interest by the imperial powers, of the sordid interest of the establishment, of the dispersion of the social movement, and of its near disappearance. This is the product of a brutal repression of more than 60 years, which has left 220,000 dead, 60,000 forcibly disappeared, almost 4,000 union members murdered, 7 million persons forcibly displaced, hundreds of massacres, an economic and political power of Colombians and foreigners based upon crime and corruption, and a “state” incapable of responding in a context of legal and constitutional guarantees, which supposedly are the “rails” upon which the Colombia “democracy” ought to travel.

This week the process of selecting magistrates for the Tribunal of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz, JEP) has begun. The magistrates will be in charge of imparting “justice” in the context of a state which, I repeat, does not guarantee legal security in the creation of norms and an impartial, efficient and speedy operation of the apparatus of justice. The JEP must respond, confronting war crimes and crimes of lese humanity, which were committed by the actors in the conflict, those armed and those unarmed.

One of the principal challenges is how to apply the law with “justice,” a

law created by persons linked to the violence which is proposed to be judged. There are members of Congress allied to those who brought into existence the violence which guaranteed the exclusion of millions of campesinos, Afro-Colombians, and indigenous people from what today constitutes 655 of the zones where economic megaprojects are going to be developed and which contain almost 7 million hectares, land for which these people have suffered so many dead.

How can justice be given with the aid of “international cooperation,” which was and continues to be directed to guarantee the sacking of natural resources and their export to the so-called developed countries? These are the same countries which generated the war so that their businesses would comply with their economic objectives at the cost of hundreds of thousands of dead in our nation.

Our Questions

Can a country be reconstructed when its establishment has facilitated cruel institutional violence and corruption as forms of “nation-building”?—expelling from their lands and homes the majority of the people of this country who held the hope that one day they would not be re-victimized, persecuted and murdered? Can justice be built in a country in which crimes against members of social organizations do not cease, when up until today more than 163 activists have been murdered in the last year? Isn’t the “state” supposed to be that which guarantees for its citizens life, honor and material possessions?

Are the establishment and the multinational corporations going to respond for crimes against thousands of union members, for the impunity in 99% of these cases, for the persistence of “legal” and illegal repression, by means first of the creation of laws which seriously restrict the rights to organize labor unions, of mobilization, collective bargaining and free association? How will those companies respond which according to the Attorney General can present themselves if they wish, but if they can’t they will not be required to. This could produce an additional problem for them, since any person may be able to accuse them before the Universal Jurisdiction of Human Rights for the commission of war crimes and crimes of lese humanity. And they will run the risk that sometime justice will fall upon them for the quantity of crimes committed in a process of war spread and fed by them and from which they have gained a lot of additions to their already colossal profits.

These are some of the challenges which ought to confront the so-called Special Jurisdiction for Peace, in a country which refuses to close its wounds precisely because of the lack of justice, and which is being urged by the great powers to push to a war against the Venezuelan people, in a territory which has 5.6 million Colombian refugees. These refugees are the product of the war of extermination which our country has suffered, through so many, many years, which has caused harm to the life and existence of those who wish to build a just nation, for all men and women, non-exclusionary, without the criminal influence of the economic and political powers of the region, who have had them subjugated for as much time already as a nation can tolerate. Hopefully God and good fortune will accompany us in these new challenges.

Francisco Ramirez Cuellar

Labor union member and attorney

Colombia Support Network Delegation to Colombia, November 6–18, 2017

The Colombia Support Network (CSN) is organizing a delegation to Colombia for November 6–18, 2017. We will begin our visit with our Wisconsin sister community, the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado in northern Antioquia Department, and will then travel to Medellin for meetings with officials and human rights workers there. Then we will travel to Bogotá, where we plan to meet with Colombian Government officials and attorneys who drafted or negotiated parts of the Peace Agreement between the FARC-EP guerrillas and the Colombian government, progressive members of the Colombian Congress and of citizen organizations, human rights NGO's and labor union leaders. We plan to discuss the successes and difficulties of implementation of the Peace Agreement, and the effects on civil society. After our visit to Bogotá, we will travel to

the Sibundoy Valley in Putumayo Department to visit the Kamentsa and Inga indigenous communities and discuss with them threats to the environment posed by road construction and mining projects and how they are working to preserve their heritage and traditional economy.

The cost to participate in the delegation is \$1,900.00, including all transportation within Colombia, lodging and meals as well as the services of a professional translator, who will accompany us. This does not include round-trip airfare from the United States to Colombia. Please send us an email to jlaun515@gmail.com or to csn@igc.com or give us a call @ (608) 257-8753 if you are interested in going on the delegation, or have questions about the delegation.

Jack Laun

President of CSN