

COLOMBIA: Arrests in murder of Afro-Colombian Leader

RRN letters 10/17/05 and 11/14/05

UA 272/05

RRN members expressed their outrage to Colombian officials after **Orlando Valencia's murdered corpse was discovered on October 24, 2005**, only identifiable by his finger prints. He had been shot in the forehead with his wrists tied and thrown into the river. A month earlier, RRN members had written after his forced disappearance by army-backed paramilitaries. Two paramilitaries abducted Orlando just after police released him from a brief, arbitrary detention.

Valencia had been a community leader in Jiguamiandó, a self-declared "peace community" in Chocó Department that is **fighting African palm oil agribusiness from appropriating their land titles**. The community has suffered over 20 paramilitary incursions. Orlando left a wife and seven children.

On May 16, 2006 the Colombian Presidential Program on Human Rights sent an update to IRTF about the steps they have taken in the case. In February and March, two paramilitaries known as Diomedes and Boxeador were picked up near Apartadó, Antioquia. They are being held on charges of aggravated murder. Witness testimonies are still being gathered.

Assuredly, the quick investigation and arrests are the result of international pressure placed on the Colombia government for justice in the murder of Orlando Valencia.