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Press Release

La Via Campesina, FIAN and CETIM are pressuring the UN to give more attention to the rights of peasants in the world

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Peasants all over the world are struggling for their lives. Many have died trying to defend their land and local knowledge. Others have been arrested, terrorized, tortured and even killed in their struggle for life. Some cases are still fresh in our minds: just last month Enrico Cabanit, Secretary General of UNORKA (peasant organization in the Philippines) was murdered; in November 2005 Jeon Yong – Cheol, a Korean farmer died as a result of police brutality during a rally against the liberalization of the rice market. In September 2005 police disrupted an international meeting of La Via Campesina in Tanak Awuk West Nusa Tenggara Indonesia, wounding 27 persons and causing a miscarriage to a woman peasant. In Brazil peasant leaders are currently facing repression because in March they challenged the TNC Aracruz and the rural development policies that foster agribusiness and eucalyptus monocultures. During the protest rallies against WTO last December in Hong Kong hundreds of members of La Via Campesina were detained. These are but just few documented examples. Many other cases remain unknown to the public at large but occur in peasants' daily life.

This year again La Via Campesina is releasing its annual report on the violations of human rights suffered by its members. These violations are multiple and affect the full range of human rights: massive forced displacement and legal acceptance of land theft committed by paramilitary groups in Colombia, destruction of the environment and natural resources in the Dominican Republic, forced evictions in Indonesia, massive migration of peasants from Latin-America who become cheap labour without any rights in the US. Dumping practices have flooded local markets with cheap agricultural products in many countries so that local peasants cannot compete with the low prices of imported goods. That way Indian and Thai farmers for example have got trapped into high indebtedness. Over 10,000 cases of suicide of Indian farmers have been reported as a result. As for Europe, every 3 minutes a farm disappears because small farmers cannot compete in the face of large-scale competition.

The Annual Report on Violations of Peasant Human Rights will be used as evidence that peasants' rights need urgent recognition and a better protection in the UN Human Rights system. Therefore La Via Campesina, FIAN and CETIM demand:

1. the enforcement of existing instruments protecting peasants' human rights. To develop additional instruments, especially an International Convention on Peasant Rights which is necessary for an effective protection of such rights. We call on the recently created UN Human Rights Council to put Peasant Rights on its agenda as a top priority.
2. an immediate investigation and punishment of those responsible for the murders and crimes committed against peasants in the Philippines, South Korea, Colombia, Honduras, Indonesia and many other countries. The UN Human Rights bodies should urge the governments of these countries to combat impunity of the crimes and human rights violations committed against peasants.
3. to acknowledge and protect the human rights of all migrants.
4. To take agriculture out of WTO and bilateral and regional free trade agreements because they are violating peasants' rights and hinder the attainment of Food Sovereignty of our peoples.

We call other social movements and civil society organizations throughout the world to support the initiative of an International Convention on Peasant Rights and a better protection of peasants' rights.

Information on the annual report please visit La Via Campesina's website: www.viacampesina.org