

Letter from Héctor Mondragón
April 2009

We are alive because many people have prayed for us and we give thanks to all those who have prayed to God, that He has heard your prayers. We have been shown hospitality by the Brazilians, the Mennonite church fraternity, from my co-workers and our incredible neighbors. Equally we feel the support and the nostalgia of our family members and friends in Colombia and in so many parts, especially in the United States. You have sustained us with your messages, material support as well as spiritual support. We have felt that each person is like an angel, helping us in our efforts.

With Stella (my wife) we have formally asked for refuge in Brazil, for us and for our son, who thanks be to God, has felt very good here. We ask for prayer that our request be granted, since our work situation depends on it. In every way we have felt very calm and at peace, we have not felt this way for a long time and these last three months have been like an oasis.

These days I have been happy because the Law 1152 of 2007 or the Rural Statute of Colombia was overturned by the Constitutional Court on March 18th. It is very important because this law destroyed the farmer's rights and did not recognize the rights of the indigenous; furthermore it legitimated the robbing of victim's lands, of the thousands of displaced families by the violence that previously affected them. We had presented three cases, but the first was sufficient for the law to be overturned: the indigenous communities and African communities who were directly affected by the law were not previously consulted regarding the law.

The large indigenous mobilization that occurred in many places in Colombia in October and November asked as one of their five demands, that this law be overturned. This is an important victory, but it has come with a high cost. On December 15, a few short days after my wife left Colombia Aída Quilcué's husband was assassinated by the Colombian military. Aída Quilcué was one of the indigenous women leaders. Aída Quilcué was commissioned by all of the indigenous of Colombia to have a public debate with the President, during which her ability shone. Later she went to Geneva, Switzerland to denounce the human right violations that the different actors commit against the indigenous of Colombia and upon her return to Colombia, her husband was assassinated.

An ex-minister of agriculture wrote in the newspaper on April 2nd that our "shout of victory" for the overturned law 1152 "can become a moan". This sounds like a threat. I recall that when I took refuge in Spain with my two oldest children, we were threatened because of another legal triumph, when the indigenous group Embera Katió won their case against a business that built a dam on their territory. After this victory, they had to endure the assassination of 17 leaders, and their shout of victory was turned into a moan. Please pray that this time the happiness will not be broken.

Pray because your prayers are heard and are powerful. In the middle of what occurred at the end of 2008 I was able to write a book about the international crisis. God hears our prayer and gives us strength and spirit. "Blessed is he who has regard for the poor, the Lord delivers him in times of trouble, the Lord will protect him and preserve his life, he will bless him in the land..."

Héctor Mondragón
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