

Press release:

Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2011

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Chronic Hunger: Consequence of Impunity of Right to Food Violations

Geneva/Stuttgart/Utrecht, October 11, 2011 - Despite the growth of a worldwide Right to Food movement and the existence of international frameworks and mechanisms to protect human rights, an unacceptable number of violations remain unpunished, according to the *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2011*, an annual publication released today that monitors food security and nutrition policies from a human rights perspective.

The publication identifies a lack of accountability as the “missing link” between people’s struggle for their rights and the increased recognition of the right to food in political agendas that has occurred over the past 25 years.

According to UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, “By empowering courts or other independent bodies to monitor compliance with the human right to adequate food, we transform fundamentally the relationship between the poor and the marginalized, and those -- whether they are State bodies or private actors -- who make decisions that can affect them. There were needs to be fulfilled: there are now rights that must be respected. The relationship was one of charity: it has become one of duty. This fundamental shift represents not only a gain in effectiveness in the fight against hunger: it is also a gain in dignity for the hungry.”

Thanks to its partners on four continents, the *Watch* provides 15 national and regional reports on the right to food and nutrition accountability including on Guatemala, Haiti, Germany, Switzerland, Cameroon, Uganda, China, and Pakistan.

One of the many cases documented in the *Watch* is that of continued murders and forced evictions of peasants perpetrated by the military, police and private security guards in the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras.

The peasant movements of Bajo Aguán have struggled for their right to food by demanding access to land and agrarian reform against ongoing land grabbing by huge palm oil producers. However, they have faced persecution and abuse. Between January 2010 and October 2011, 40 peasants' murders were registered as a result of the agrarian conflict in the region. The crimes committed have not been investigated and remain in impunity.

Other rights' violations identified by the *Watch* this year include the ongoing harassment and murder of peasant farmers and human rights defenders in Togo; the illegal granting of land concessions to the palm oil industry by the government of Malaysia at the expense of its indigenous communities; and the lack of improvement in the status of women and girls in relation to the right to food, despite their vital role in establishing food security.

"The Right to Food and Nutrition Watch 2011 denounces the flagrant lack of accountability of both government and private actors that gives rise to daily violations of the right to food. This publication is a fundamental tool to give voice to the victims and to draw public attention to situations of intolerable injustice," Jean Ziegler, Vice-President of the United Nations Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee.

Progress in the recognition of rights related to food, including the increasing use of national judicial systems as channels for claiming rights and seeking remedy, is acknowledged by the *Watch's* contributing authors, who include medical experts, government representatives, NGO workers and social movement members.

However, human rights violations, and a marked failure to remedy their consequences, remains the norm, even in cases where rights are enshrined in constitutional law, as in Bolivia and Ecuador. Those deprived of the right to adequate food remain in a state of dire poverty and hunger while violations are repeated by offenders, with impunity.

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For more information, and to download the report: <http://www.rtfn-watch.org/>

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