

# RESILIENCE



christian peacemaker teams

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We're turning

35

next year.

In honor of our partners, supporters, and you,  
we'll be making it a year of action. Stay tuned  
for ways you can take action for peace.

Thank you for standing with us.

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## Letter from the editor

I vividly remember huddling around a cellphone with three teammates on a red woolen carpet in the mountains of northeast Iraqi Kurdistan. We were watching footage of sheep grazing on lush high mountain pastures. The camera then panned to the left, revealing a hole in the ground, a crater formed by aerial bombings the day before. As we watched the screen, Kak Bapir, a shepherd and a long time CPT partner, made it very clear: he will not leave Basta, his village, despite Turkey's indiscriminate bombings throughout the region. His family has lived in the Pishdar region for generations and were key peacemakers during the civil war.

Not much later, we hear explosions in the distance. Concerned for our safety, Kak Bapir urges us to leave. It would take us at least two hours of driving through winding, unpaved mountain roads to reach a "safe" area.

I wonder what resilience means for Kak Bapir? In this issue, we're pondering that question.

There is a bit of resilience in all of us, particularly this year, as we try to find "normality" and grieve a loss impossible to fathom. Our way forward to collective and individual resiliency is dependent on the trust we build to take action together: to provide care, to demand change in systems that work against the common good, and to make sure it's done in a way that addresses historical injustices.

As 2020 winds down, we can point to moments of shock, when profits mattered over people and decision-makers rationalized the sacrificing of some lives.

This brings me back to the question: what does resilience mean for Kak Bapir? What does resilience look like living through decades of aerial bombings? What is our role in building a world of resilient communities that create collective momentum to challenge injustice, oppression, and violence? Neither us nor Kak Bapir can do it alone; it is a burden that needs to be shared. We can't comment and admire the resiliency of the oppressed if we are not ready to work to transform a reality that breeds the normalcy of resilience.

We don't need more resilience. We need justice.

Happy holidays!

In kindness,

Caldwell Manners  
Communications Coordinator



*Front cover photo: Caldwell Manners*

*Doña Nidia, leader of El Garzal and Nueva Esperanza land process, carries a fresh 12kg block of homemade, salty, Campesino cheese, ready to be sold door to door in the community.*

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Many people, both migrants and residents in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, have been suffering since the Covid-19 virus arrived. The pandemic has not only affected the public health sphere but also resulted in the closure of the US/Mexican border, affecting migrants and almost everyone who is not a US citizen. Before, people with a US visa could cross freely to visit friends and family, go shopping, and take care of business. Even though the process was slow, asylum seekers could eventually present their case to enter the US. But now, most US visitors and volunteers have stopped coming to the border, which has resulted in a loss of income and person power to do humanitarian work. Also, people have lost jobs and cannot feed their families, and no one is safe from the virus.

So, how have the people of Agua Prieta coped during this challenging time? They have responded with a resilience that shows hope for better times and faith in the future.

Since March, the population at CAME (Centro de Atención Migrante Exodus) migrant centre has ranged from about 35 to less than 20 people. Several families left the shelter, and one new family arrived. Only a few local volunteers have been allowed inside. At one point in the summer, many residents and a few volunteers had contracted Covid-19, but all have recovered.

Some of the residents at CAME – which is housed in the Sagrada Familia Catholic Church – can now leave the shelter daily to work at various jobs. A very small staff still comes daily to provide support for the families and offer activities for everyone. The children still participate in language and math lessons, everyone enjoys art and recreational events, and the migrants join with the church congregation in celebrating their faith.

One particular event that brought together people from the shelter, the church, and the community took place on 2 November to celebrate Día de los Muertos. In Latin American cultures, it is a day to remember loved ones who have died, and in the migrant community, it is a day to remember everyone who has died in the desert trying to enter the US. People gathered at the border wall wearing masks and painted faces to call out the names of the dead which were painted on crosses, and to join together, saying, “Presente!”

In every way possible, the migrants and staff



# A hope for better times

By Linda Knox

have continued with life. They have found ways to create something new rather than to be defeated and lose hope.

Coffee Justo is another partner organization and friend of CPT in Agua Prieta that

has refused to be defeated. This Mexican cooperative grows coffee in the southern state of Chiapas and roasts and sells the coffee in Agua Prieta. When coffee sales to the US slowed because of the pandemic, the

folks at Coffee Justo started selling coffee on the streets from a small food wagon and launched a new mail-order campaign. The promotion offered coffee for a few extra dollars, which Coffee Justo would donate to other organizations whose members and neighbourhoods were not getting enough to eat. This campaign resulted in Coffee Justo selling more coffee and some hungry people getting more food.

One group that received food grants was Douglaprieta Trabajan, a women's cooperative for gardening, cooking and sewing. The women were able to keep their families fed and to share with other families in their neighbourhood. These women also figured out how to keep earning money by sewing even though much of their additional income sources had dried up. Since last spring, they have sewed thousands of masks that have been sold, mostly in the US.

Finally, the most apparent sign of resilience in Agua Prieta is project expansion and the beginning of new projects. For example, Coffee Justo, along with the Coffee Justo y Mas Coffee, continue to grow their operation. They are adding a small new storage room/restroom building and building a new commercial kitchen in the Presbyterian Church across the street as they continue with their plans to begin serving food at the coffee shop.

Another sign of construction is the new migrant shelter at the Sagrada Familia Church's previous education building. In the last year, workers built the outside wall and renovated the classrooms into bedrooms. The final construction is now close to completion. The director recently said the building might have been finished by now, but all the construction workers in town are busy with other projects.

The realities of life have changed for the migrant community at CAME, the folks at Coffee Justo, and the women of Douglaprieta. They are facing reduced income and the constant threat of the Covid-19 virus. They have been forced to redirect and re-evaluate their plans for the future. Yet, in different ways, they have all done just that. They have continued the parts of their lives that were most important by adapting and changing when necessary. They have reached out to others who had less. They have worn masks and made masks. And they have continued to build for the future. They will flourish and grow in new buildings, and the migrants will – one day – be able to continue their journeys to a new life. ■



# “They tried to bury us, they didn’t know we were seeds.”

By Mona al Zuhairi



For seventy-two years the Israeli occupation has tried to bury Palestinians, literally and figuratively, attempting to extinguish their dreams in every possible way.

The horrors of the occupation have left no stone unturned. When you meet a Palestinian, you either meet a refugee, a mourning parent, a displaced family, a family of a prisoner, an amputee, the list goes on. However, although the occupation attempts to reduce Palestinians to numbers and labels, when you meet a Palestinian you will also meet an artist, a dancer, a poet, a doctor, and so much more.

By living under occupation and carrying the weight of this burden from one generation to another, Palestinians learned how to live, rise and achieve. People who live under constant oppression and long-lasting occupation always find their silver lining.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictions on travel, CPT Palestine is now relying on local Palestinian volunteers to keep the project running. Of course, documenting Israeli human rights abuses as a Palestinian involves a much higher risk. But these CPTers, all in their twenties, believe they are part of the change that needs to happen in their community.

Five local team members start their daily work around 6:30am, monitoring checkpoints to make sure students arrive safely to their schools. They manage to get up every day, regardless of the harassment they experience while passing the Israeli checkpoints in order to monitor and document.

They were asked what allows them to continue amidst this unjust situation, what makes them wake up every day to stand at a military checkpoint knowing that they won't see an immediate result for their work?

Tarteel has hope that a new reality is possible. “I’m looking for peace within myself and the outside world. When I see myself laughing with my family, friends, mates and the kids at the checkpoints, I see that we Palestinians want to live in peace, we just need better conditions!”

Ahmad draws strength from the children with “smiley faces and their heads held high after they pass the checkpoints.”

Abdallah makes a point of “smiling to the children and wishing them a great day before they cross the checkpoint to go to school. This makes me believe that maybe this small act will help them to start a good day despite all the difficulties”

“Monitoring checkpoints also includes a humanitarian service,” says Ameera. “At first it was difficult to work at checkpoints because of the soldiers’ behaviour and the body searches, as well as watching children throw stones, but gradually the children became happy when they saw us and smiled at us, and missed us when we were not there”.

Resilience in Palestine is not a choice; it is a necessity. Palestinians endure from generation to generation by being born into different shapes of sumud, a steadfastness where “the individual has to be resilient to stay and not to leave their place, position or community”.<sup>1</sup>

Palestinians cross borders and generations, with a belief, like Tarteel, that “I’m working for a change and that is what keeps me going! The dream of a better future for myself and the coming generation”.

In the end, oppressors need to understand that they can’t bury people thriving for life and freedom, because the oppressed will always plant their seeds, knowing there will be a season for blooming. ■

1. *Social ecology of resilience and Sumud of Palestinians*, Mohammad Marie An-Najah National University, Palestine Ben Hannigan and Aled Jones Cardiff University, UK, 2016



# The phoenix needs to take his time

By Rûnbîr Serkepkani

with a big cup of coffee beside him, holding a cigarette between two fingers of his right hand. He dragged on it as if the bricks of his soul were vanishing every second, and the cigarette smoke was holding the walls of his soul together, replacing the vanishing pieces. He would not respond to your 'good morning,' he would not return your smile, he would not answer your 'how did you sleep?' It was his grounding moment, when the phoenix of his soul was getting reborn from the ash of the dreams and shaking the dust from his wings.

Then he stood up, refilled his coffee from the thermos in the middle of the courtyard, put some peanut

tightly to prevent the freedom of movement of migrants. He stirred the food pots the whole day. He interpreted for the prison group when my Arabic was not enough, and we had to call him and disrupt him from whatever he was doing. He would distribute food to migrants who were in the forests around Idomeni, hiding from the police. Meanwhile, he tried to get away from the hell of captivity along with 12,000 migrants who were in the Idomeni camp.

IDOMENI, GREECE

We met in the mud of Idomeni in March 2016. He was skinny and had a light beard. He spoke modified Moroccan Arabic, skipping the Amazigh, French and Spanish words and replacing them with standard Arabic ones so that we from the Peninsula would understand him. He spoke quickly as if someone was after him. He took deep puffs from his cigarettes like each one of them would be his last. He had lived chasing an uncertain destination for two years, travelling through closed borders full of landmines.

He was one of the three thousand migrants who had recently crossed the border into Northern Macedonia on foot and were pushed back by the army, robbed, beaten and then thrown a whole day's worth of walking from the Idomeni border camp on the Greek side of the border. They collectively challenged the barriers that EU states had put in their way and were collectively humiliated and robbed of their freedom of movement.

The second place where I met him was in Micro Dassos, a small village close to Idomeni. He was living in a house rented by a loosely organized group of anarchists and other solidarity people who cooked thousands of meals for migrants in huge pots every day.

He was almost always speaking. The only time he was quiet was in the morning, just after he woke up. He sat on the doorstep

butter on two slices of bread and then joined the table with the rest of us. Then he started speaking. He would acknowledge everyone around the table and share some laughter with the group around him. I still do not know which place in Morocco he came from or what kind of life he had before starting his journey. Somehow he never gave any space for questions. Sometimes digging for answers is to put your dagger in someone's living skin. Sometimes asking a question is lighting a fire on the fuse, which will explode the equilibrium of one's soul.

We had beers and cigarettes in the evening and visited police stations where the authorities had put teenagers in so-called "protection custody." We provided independent information about what was next in a time when Europe's external and internal borders were being closed ever more

The third place where I met him was in Leipzig in September 2017. After the Greek government evicted Idomeni in May 2016 and the authorities forcibly moved people to different camps throughout Greece, he got on a bike, put panniers on it, camouflaged himself with proper cyclist clothes and a helmet, and started biking towards Germany. People in solidarity hosted him along the way, and he had to cycle up many mountain roads to avoid border police. He then went straight to the German authorities on his own terms to apply for asylum, after crossing the border and having a beer and a cigarette.

Not much had changed in him when I met him in Leipzig. The people around him were the same people who were around him in Idomeni. He was proud of defeating all those militarized borders in his personal war for his freedom of movement riding on a bicycle, pretending to be a long tour cyclist. Reaching the "destination" had not made him less talkative. Instead of a doorstep, he would sit in the garden of the squatted house where he lived, smoke his cigarette and drink his coffee in silence. Our friends told me that he had asthma and some other illnesses and that the doctor has forbidden him from smoking and drinking. I did get worried.

But I never told him about my worries because I knew he would ride up that mountain as well, on his own terms and in his own time. The phoenix needs to take his time to shake ash from his wings. ■

*This right-side-up map of Europe represents the process of recentering people in the process of decolonization.*



## Graduation to Prayer Corps

By Mark Frey, Finance Manager

For the last ten years or more, Dave would leave his house in Des Plaines, Illinois, for the two-hour public transit commute to the CPT office in Chicago. This was his routine, twice a week, rain or shine, bitter cold or scorching heat. He would water the plants, take out the recycling, get the mail, process donations, and a host of other “little things” that kept the office running smoothly. His wife Barb faithfully helped stuff newsletters and mail thank you letters.

If you're a donor, Dave likely processed your donation, and Barb mailed out your thank-you letter. In the past, they also would have stuffed the donation envelope into the newsletter you were reading.

Dave was in the Catholic priesthood early in life, and Barb was a nun in a convent teaching kids. They met twice in a hospital where Barb worked. Dave had injured himself first playing basketball and then skiing, and they “kind of struck up a good relationship at that time,” recalls Barb. Both left the religious community and got married in 1972. Dave was a university chaplain, and Barb taught kids and administered schools. She loved teaching the younger grades, and she remembers, “it was a wonderful feeling that you're actually teaching them how to read and to love it! To see the excitement in the kids!” They adopted three children from South Korea and now have two grandchildren!

Twice, at the public witness to Close the SOA (“School of the Americas,” Fort Benning, GA), Dave “crossed the line,” trespassing on the

base, and along with others, was sentenced to 6 months in prison. Barb recalls, “It seemed like you were always in prison!”

For years, every Tuesday morning, the two attended a prayer vigil against the Iraq war in downtown Chicago in front of the Federal building, rain or shine.

After retiring from Loyola University as a chaplain, Dave completed CPT training in spring 2005. He served two stints with CPT's Palestine program and then shifted to Reservist service in the office for the last ten years.

COVID has been challenging for Dave and Barb. As they are in a higher risk group, Dave and Barb needed to stop coming to the office, but they continued to help out remotely. However, life and health issues march on, and it is time to stop some things - like watering plants, taking care of the office, processing donations, mailing thank you letters - and start doing other things, like focusing on the next phase of life.

We love and miss Dave and Barb and are so glad that the Chicago office staff can still connect by video call. On the last call, over Thanksgiving, tears welled as we all acknowledged how much we miss each other. Before we could express our appreciation, they beat us to it, “we so appreciate what you do. We'll keep praying for you,” said Barb.

So, Dave and Barb are retiring from active CPT work and are moving solidly into the CPT “Prayer Corps.”

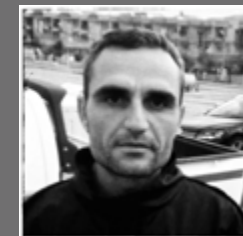
Thank you, Dave and Barb Corcoran. ■



In August, seven activists and a journalist were arrested in Iraqi Kurdistan because they demanded teachers get paid and dared to speak out against corruption in their country.

They have been denied bail, and some of them are being held in unknown locations. Even their families have been unable to find them.

**Sign the letter** at [cptaction.org](https://cptaction.org) to demand their release and condemn the criminalization of the freedom of expression.



# cptaction.org

listen. learn. take action.



# Resilience or Survival?

By Pierre Shantz

The concept of resiliency is beautiful. The idea that we can get up, brush ourselves off, and recover from difficult situations may even give us the courage to enter into these struggles with hope. Recovery from a difficult or even traumatic situation usually requires help from friends and family, finding support in one's faith or spirituality, or psychological counselling. Recovery is essential to moving forward, yet sadly for some people, it's not always possible. It's difficult to recover when the same traumatic situations continue to happen over and over again.

The communities of El Garzal, Guayabo, and Las Pavas are an example of resilience. They

are small farming communities that have faced decades of violence from several different armed actors throughout 60 years of civil war. Surviving the guns, they settled on plots of land and little by little built a life for themselves and their families. But since the government and her opponents never addressed the roots of the conflict, people with economic and political power felt entitled to the land on which these communities have settled. These actors attempted to remove the small farmers using guns once again, but that didn't work. Then they tried the courts. And in most cases, after more than ten years, we are still waiting for final rulings favouring the

communities. And in some cases, they simply try to buy off the people so they will leave. Sometimes that works. And who can blame someone for selling when the situation they are living in is so precarious and seemingly hopeless that the offer is too good to refuse?

We must wonder though, as they continue to struggle and resist, are the people of these communities resilient, or are they simply in survivor mode with no other options of which to grab hold?

After the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, when President Obama called the affected communities resilient, claiming they would recover from the disaster, Tracy Washington from the Louisiana Justice Institute responded, "Stop calling me resilient. I am not resilient. Because every time you say, 'Oh, they're resilient,' that means you can do something else to me. I'm not resilient."

Are we naively naming the continued resistance of the communities' "resilience" as a way to maintain hope ourselves or to romanticize their capacity to continue struggling? Would we despair if we felt that our partners in El Garzal, Las Pavas, or Guayabo were simply surviving? Does using the word resilience to describe them help us to be resilient and not lose hope ourselves?

When the farmers of our partner communities proudly show us their field of yucca or plantain or smile at the birth of a new

calf and help it to its feet, this is resistance. When they share their laughter and tears with us as they tell their stories of how they came to build their beloved community, this is resilience. When the leaders who face death threats choose to stay and fight even though statistically, the odds are against them as Colombia surpasses 250 community and social leaders assassinated in 2020, this is resilience. When the community rebuilds a broken wall that protects their land from flooding, this is resilience. People who are merely surviving would have taken the offer to sell and left.

So, where do they find their strength to be resilient? Many community members will answer this question by giving thanks to God for giving them the strength they need to continue resisting. Then they will recognize the organizations (sometimes a dozen or so) that have walked in solidarity with them on the journey, some of which have provided necessary psychosocial support in times of crisis. They are also aware that their stories reach readers like you around the world who support them, which is an essential part of their resilience. So, even though they will most certainly face more hardship, they will most certainly continue to give thanks to God and seek the wisdom to surround themselves with the people and tools to face these challenges. ■



Maria, her partner Jose, and their four children lived in a plot of land on the edge of the Las Pavas collective farm. But because of the constant threat of physical attacks on property and person by armed security personnel of Palm Oil company, Aportes San Isidro, they decided to move their home to another location. The isolation from other community members left their children vulnerable on their daily, round-trip, two-hour-long, mule-back commute to school. The lack of cell phone connectivity

added to the exposure. In case of any danger, the possibility of a quick response from community members living nearby was near impossible.

Pictures above, they dismantle their home to transport the wood and other material to rebuild their home at a safer location. This is the ordinary work of resistance and resilience. Photos: Caldwell Manners/ CPT

# Steering Committee Report: 10/20

The Steering Committee (SC) of CPT concluded its October meeting feeling more connected with one another, the programs of CPT, and the work of undoing oppressions. The steering committee received reports about how Covid-19 has affected the organization and its work with partners, adopted strategic directions for the next five years, explored Christian hegemony as part of CPT's undoing oppression work, formed working groups to attend to the ongoing work of CPT, and received updates and approved a number of policies. CPT continues to fulfill its mission: building partnerships to transform violence and oppression.

When the SC previously met in April, the organization had just begun to adjust to Covid-19 with the cancellation of travel and closing of programs. Six months later, the SC was able to reflect more about the ways the global pandemic continues to affect the organization. In conversation with PSCs (Program Support Coordinators) and in reports, the SC learned of the ongoing work with partners. Every program site has been able to adjust and continue their work with partners, largely due to local team members. The Administration Team (AT) shared a plan that acknowledges ongoing adjustments, including protocols for reopening travel to programs and potential budget reductions. The SC received a budget update and approved reallocation funds. We look forward to development opportunities coming at the end of the year and in our 35th anniversary celebrations in 2021.

To further the Steering Committee's commitment to undo oppression, the SC participated in conversations about CPT's Christian identity as it relates to Christian hegemony. The SC also approved a long-term working group to help the SC in its own work to dismantle oppressive practices and create an inclusive culture. SC members now join the rest of CPT in a training mandate that includes eight hours of undoing oppression training before fully participating in the decision-making work of the steering committee. The formation of a Global Sustainability Working Group was also approved to encourage the organization to prioritize environmental responsibility as part of our undoing oppression commitment.

The Steering Committee approved a Code of Conduct and Media Guidelines as part of a future Child Safeguarding Policy, an extension of emergency stipend assistance as we continue to consider long-term stipend adjustments, and subcommittee roles and responsibilities. Officers were also called for the 2020-2021 term including Marie Benner-Rhoades as chair, Steve Heinrichs as vice chair, Tori Bateman as secretary, and Wilson Tan as treasurer. A full list of current SC members can be found at [cpt.org/about/people](https://cpt.org/about/people). The Steering Committee continues to meet monthly in preparation for its biannual meeting in April again held via Zoom.

Building on CPT's values, vision, and mission, the Steering Committee approved the following strategic directions for the next five years.

## Strategic Directions

TOWARDS A WORLD THAT EXPERIENCES PEACE WITH JUSTICE: DEVELOP AND USE EDUCATIONAL TOOLS THAT CAN FOSTER THE CHANGE SOUGHT BY OUR PARTNERS.

- i. Nonviolent Work for Change: Working through nonviolence and accompaniment with communities and organizations to counter oppression, militarization, & exploitation.
- ii. Education: Learning together with communities & equipping people to confront violence and oppression, and actively seek

peace with justice

- iii. Advocacy: Strategically communicating with governments, the public, and other actors as well as other networks to inform them of CPT's work (and CPT's partners' work) & to affect structural or narrative change.

TOWARDS ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY: CONTINUE TO NURTURE AN ONGOING TRANSFORMATION OF CPT AROUND UNDOING OPPRESSIONS, FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY, AND GOVERNANCE.

- i. Anti-Oppression Work: Internalizing, implementing, and continually expanding our commitment to intersectional, anti-oppressive work within CPT in accordance with Strategic Directions for Shaping an Anti-Racist Identity for CPT and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- ii. Good Stewardship: Effectively, responsibly,

and ethically manage our relationship with donors and major funders, and our organizational resources, with an abundance mindset.

- iii. Good Governance: Improving transparent governance that becomes more accountable to receptive to the needs of the CPT community and its partners.

TOWARDS A WORLD AWARE OF HUMANITY'S INTERCONNECTEDNESS: DEFINE THE ROLE CPT PLAYS IN THE GLOBAL STRUGGLE FOR PEACE, JUSTICE, AND SUSTAINABLE LIFE, WHILE INCORPORATING NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF ITS ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY.

- i. Intersectional Analysis: Incorporate an understanding of the ways that climate change & environmental degradation, global migration, militarism, classism, economic injustice, and other issues are held together within CPT's work
- ii. CPT in the World: Develop a deeper understanding of CPT's specific contributions to the world in the current political context,

and how we differ from and/or work with the many other organizations, movements, and actors in peace & justice spaces.

- iii. Honoring the Multiplicity of Voices: Identify the many movements and communities working towards peace and justice across the globe, amplify their voices in CPT's communications, and educate CPT's constituency about their diverse contexts.





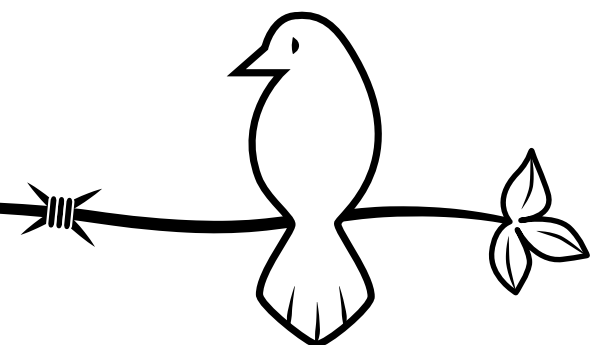
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**Colombia:** CPTer Carolina Santana documents the damage to community leader Eric Payares' home by local police during an eviction. The El Guayabo community land process leaders have frequently been targeted by police and local armed groups for defending their right to their land. On this occasion, an eviction was issued. But after the house was ransacked and destroyed, it was abandoned by both the police and the claimant. These tactics are often used to wear down farming communities to abandon their property and succumb to a land grab. Payares has reoccupied his home.

*Photo: Caldwell Manners*

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Colombia.**

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**Building Partnerships to Transform  
Violence and Oppression**

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