



## Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

*In conjunction with  
Latin America Working Group Education Fund  
Washington Office on Latin America*

### **Colombia's Human Rights Defenders: Protecting Rights, Building Peace**

Thursday, February 18, 2016  
10 - 11 AM  
2255 Rayburn House Office Building

#### **Panelists**



**Francia Elena Márquez Mina** is an Afro-Colombian leader of Yolombó village in Buenos Aires municipality, located in the north of Cauca. Her recent work has focused on the defense of the ethnic and territorial rights of Afro-Colombian communities, especially the community of La Toma, Suárez municipality. Ms. Márquez coordinates the area of collective rights and human rights in Palenque Alto Cauca. She is also responsible for processes with black communities and is the spokeswoman of the Mobilization of Women for Care for Life and Ancestral Territories. *Francia won the 2015 award for human rights defender of the year.*



**Luz Eleana Galeano** is the spokeswoman for *Mujeres Caminando por la Verdad (Women Walking for Truth)*, an organizing space created in the aftermath of “Operation Orion,” conducted by the Colombian army in 2002 in Medellín’s Comuna 13. The collective, participatory space permits women victims to search for the disappeared and fight for truth, justice and reparation. They propose mechanisms for restorative justice as a way to seek peace and they have contributed to the public debate about the impact of the armed conflict on the lives of women. *Mujeres Caminando por la Verdad won the 2015 award for a social or community-based collective human rights process of the year.*



**Fabián Laverde** is the spokesman for the *Corporación Social para la Asesoría y Capacitación Comunitaria* (*Social Corporation for Community Advising and Training*) of Casanare. Survivors of systematic killings of the Departamental Association of Farmers of Casanare in the early 1990s, COS-PACC works to strengthen community organizations and contributes to the reconstruction of social fabric in a context of ongoing humanitarian crises, human rights violations and infractions of international humanitarian law in a highly

conflictive area of the country. COS-PACC focuses primarily on developing legal cases, providing legal advice and accompaniment, and promoting agro-ecological production, while also encouraging international awareness of the realities of marginalized communities, peasant organizations, victims of state crimes, political prisoners, and the impact of multinational companies. *COS-PACC won the 2015 award for non-governmental human rights organization of the year.*



**William Rivas** is the spokesman for the *Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral de Atrato* (*Community Council of the Peasant Association of the Atrato*), or COCOMACIA. COCOMACIA was born 35 years ago as an organization designed to increase the visibility of, report on and accompany the communities of the Middle Atrato and surrounding municipalities, regarding the violation of human rights. COCOMACIA has worked decisively to assist in the return processes of displaced communities to their territories

by providing support and organizational training. The organization has achieved the collective titling of 800,000 hectares which has benefitted 7,000 families and 45,000 people, and has contributed to and implemented a plan for ethno-development. *COCOMACIA won the 2015 human rights lifetime achievement award.*

### Moderator



**Lisa Haugaard** is the executive director of the Latin America Working Group which encourages U.S. policies towards Latin America that promote human rights, justice, peace and sustainable development. Lisa has been executive director of LAWG since June 2002. From 1993 to 2001, she served as Senior Associate at the LAWG, where she worked on Colombia and Central America policy, development assistance and other topics. She has testified before the U.S. Congress and produced numerous reports and articles on U.S.-Latin America policy. Prior to her work at the LAWG, she was executive director of the Central America Historical Institute in Washington, DC and writer, editor and translator for the Jesuit Instituto Historico Centroamericano in Managua, Nicaragua. She has a BA from Swarthmore College, a Master's degree in Latin American studies from New York University, and was a Fulbright scholar in Central America.