

The events of 5 June 2009 in 'la Curva del Diablo'

The photo witness report of Thomas Quirynen and Marijke Deleu (see Spanish version for accompanying photos)

These photos were taken by two young Belgians that work with CATAPA on environmental and humanitarian issues in Jaén. This is their witness report and photos of what they experienced on Friday 5 June 2009.

The night of 4 June, there was a meeting between the General of the police, the Bishop of Jaén and indigenous leaders. The General told them they had received orders to lift the roadblock and they would proceed on Friday 5 or Saturday 6. The General told them he would give them till 10:00 AM of Friday 5 for them to go by themselves without police intervention.

Friday 5, at 6 in the morning, Thomas and Marijke received a call in Jaén, warning them that the clearing had started and there were already wounded. They immediately went to the area, accompanied by two national reporters of Frecuencia Latina.

This is what they found in "Curva del Diablo".

Marijke and Thomas arrived at the bridge 'Corral Quemado', where police stopped them and did not let them pass. They left the car and proceeded on foot, and then by mototaxi to "Curva del Diablo".

1 y 2 y 3. The 'Curva' itself was already cleared, but police was everywhere and people were together at some 200 m, continuing the protest.

4. There was smoke everywhere, in the road and in the mountains at both sides, and burning grass could be seen.

5. A group of people had stopped around a wounded and called on the police to let them evacuate the wounded person. The police did not stop and continued advancing.

6 y 7: Marijke and Thomas pass the police and arrive where the wounded person. People took away the wounded and left running.

8: immediately after police started to shoot again and throw tear gas grenades.

9: People fled, also Marijke and Thomas, trying to escape from the bullets and tear gas grenades.

10, 11, 12: Police keep advancing, between bullets and tear gas. Marijke and Thomas were separated in the confusion. A police officer pointed a tear gas grenade gun at Marijke, she called out: "European, press, foreigner" but the police fires towards her, and she was only saved because an indigenous pulled her to the ground.

13: police captured at least one indigenous

14: The threw him to the ground and started to hit him, regardless of the intents by Marijke to get him to stop.

15: A police moved towards Marijke, Thomas and the reporters.

16 y 17. At a sudden police started to shoot to the left, responding to fire that came from that side. There was confusion all around, people threw themselves to the ground.

18: The police captured and threatened a detainee.

19: Several police took traditional awajun spears.

21. The helicopter came and took those that were detained.

23. They started throwing tear gas grenades from the helicopter.

24-27: Police stopped an ambulance that passed by. 4 people were in the ambulance. They were taken out by the police, who said they had concealed weapons and they were hit.

28-32: Police hit one of the persons from the ambulance.

33: Police hit an indigenous male nurse Martinez that was in the ambulance

35-36: As the road had been opened, the first trucks began to move. Some of the trucks were carrying gasoline. The police stopped firing to let pass all the cars.

A second ambulance passed by with two people seriously injured or killed.

38: Thomas saw how this policeman pointed his gun toward the native who's running in the background. But when the police realized that Thomas was taking the picture, he moved his weapon and pointed just with his finger.

39 and 40: The people of Bagua Grande and Bagua Chica who heard on the radio what was going on at the roadblock came running. They were numerous and furious. They burned the car of the prosecutor. Marijke and Thomas saw that they had no firearms but they carried sticks and stones, some were carrying machetes.

41-43: People of Bagua Grande and Bagua Chica were reaching the place, ran towards the police, until they realized that the police was firing. Then they turned and began to flee along with the Indians, carrying all the wounded. All came together in a chaos at the crossroads called El Reposo. Marijke and Thomas were afraid that the police would shoot at them. Thus they climbed a hill nearby to protect themselves and to see what was happening, but the police shot at them.

44-47: These photos show the wounded and dead at the intersection El Reposo. They were taken in mototaxis to hospitals Bagua Chica and Bagua Grande.

48-51: When they were at the intersection El Reposo, the police continued throwing tear gas on people from the helicopter. These photos show the wounded people and people taking water to counteract the effects of tear gas.

When the police arrived at El Reposo, they arrested many people. Marijke and Thomas saw it but could not take pictures.

52-55: Everybody started to run away from El Reposo, returning to Bagua Grande and Bagua Chica to protect them from bombs and bullets. Marijke and Thomas took a mototaxi to Bagua Grande.

56: The Indians gathered at the plaza of Bagua Grande. As they had not eaten all day, some ate something there.

57-60: In the hospital of Bagua Grande, Marijke and Thomas only took pictures of the wounded which condition was not too serious, because the serious injured were being attended by physicians. Doctors told them that they had two dead people in the hospital. There were too many people hurt for the

capacity of the hospital, although Marijke and Thomas only counted 19 persons officially registered in the hospital register.

61: Afterwards Marijke and Thomas went out into the streets and saw a mass of people gathered in front of the station. Thomas approached them, but the police started shooting, so he turned away.

62-65: Afterwards Marijke and Thomas went to Bagua Chica, where cars and buildings were burned by the population of Bagua Chica. The streets were full of stones and broken glass.

66-69: Marijke and Thomas went to the hospital in Bagua Chica. Forty-seven people had been admitted in the hospital. Marijke interviewed some of the injured about what happened.

70-73: There were three deaths in the hospital at that time. An Indian patrolman, a policeman and a mestizo. The mestizo body was being cleansed, so they couldn't take a photo. Marijke and Thomas saw that the body of the dead Indian was taken out of the hospital into a car. They do not know why.

72: The list of people registered at the hospital, of which three are dead.

74-78: Marijke and Thomas met with Carlos Navas, the mayor of Imacita and the fiscal of Utcu bamba (Bagua Grande). Carlos Navas and the prosecutor told them they had seen dead people on the road but when they tried to pick them up, the police shot at them and did not let them pass. Then, Marijke and Thomas returned to the road. There was no police there anymore, but found two bodies together under an overhang. One of them (photo 78) had bullet wounds in his back. Their bodies were beaten and burned.

79-81: Beyond the Curva del Diablo they found three more bodies. They were beaten and burned also.

82-83: In the morning, someone who knew Thomas and Marijke, came to the curve of the Devil at 8:00 am. He came from Jaen. He tried to climb the near hill to see if there were people injured or dead. This person told Marijke and Thomas that he saw a helicopter hanging down near to the ground, remain a time without rest and then fly away. The police did not allow this person to see more closely what was happening. In the afternoon, Thomas climbed the hill with some friends who had arrived. They did not find injured or dead people but they found bloodstains on the ground, bullets, cartridges, the remnants of tear gas, bloodied pieces of clothing, and large areas burned.

84-86: Thomas and Marijke returned to Bagua Grande. They heard that the prosecutor had been able to withdraw the bodies of the road. They bought some medicines for the hospital in Bagua Grande. They interviewed some people in the hospital and heard that there were many people in the city who had been wounded with lost bullets in front of the police station. Afterwards they returned to Jaen, where they spent the night.