

Chiquita's friendly image in the United States hides a dark history of funding generations of displacement and violence in Colombia.



Under its original name, the United Fruit Company, it was involved in efforts to seize land for its banana plantations and to quash the union movement that sprung up in response to its abusive labor practices.



December 5 and 6, 1928

This abuse culminated in the "Banana Massacre," where the Colombian army opened fire on a crowd of protesters, resulting in over a thousand deaths, in an egregious attempt to protect corporate interests.

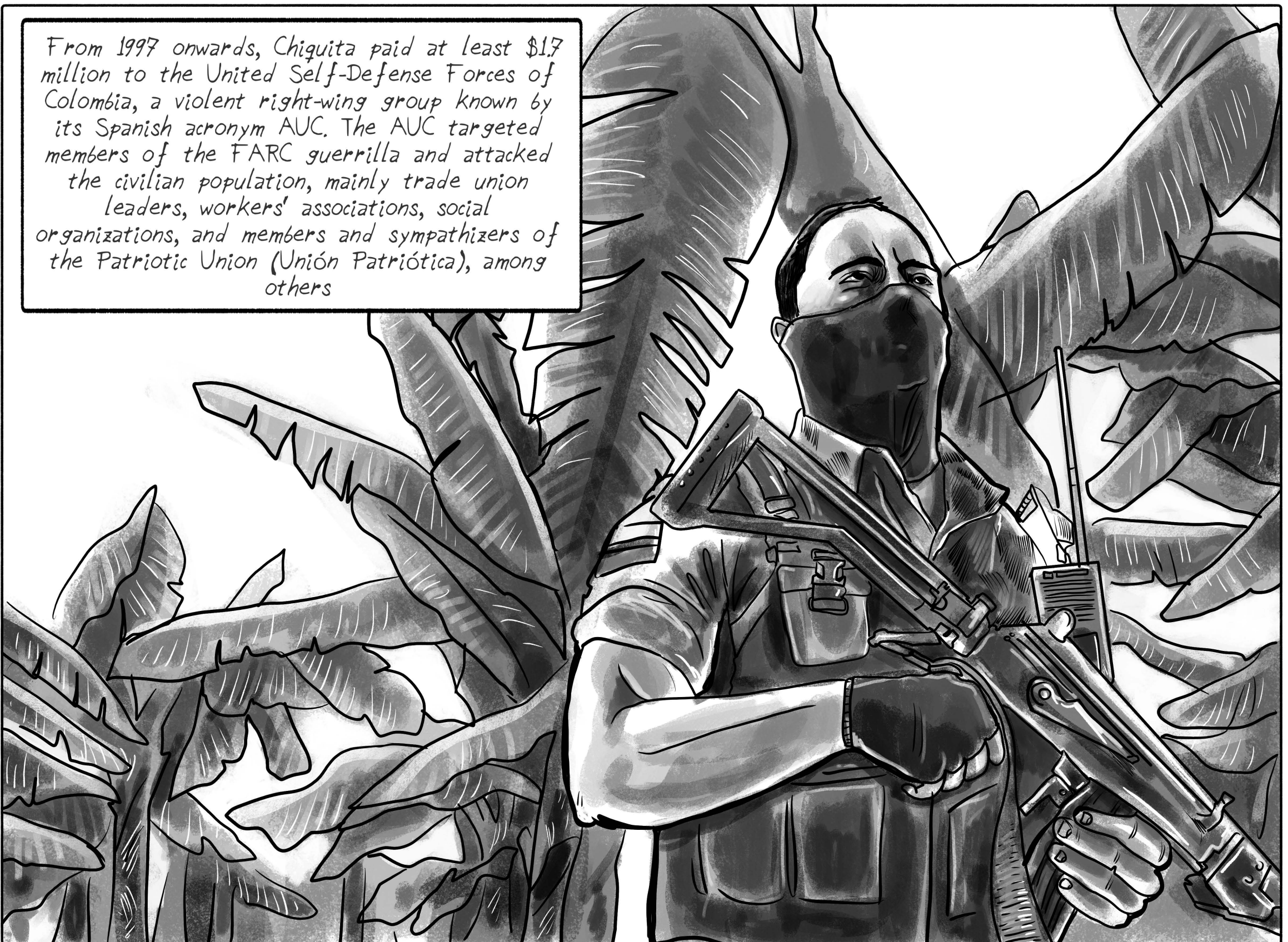


United Fruit Company rebranded as Chiquita, attempting to distance itself from this memory, but its actions helped set the stage for future attacks on Colombian communities.

In 1997, bananas were Colombia's third-most important agricultural export. Over 80% of Colombia's bananas were exported from the Uraba region, and 90% of Urabá's economy depended on the banana industry.



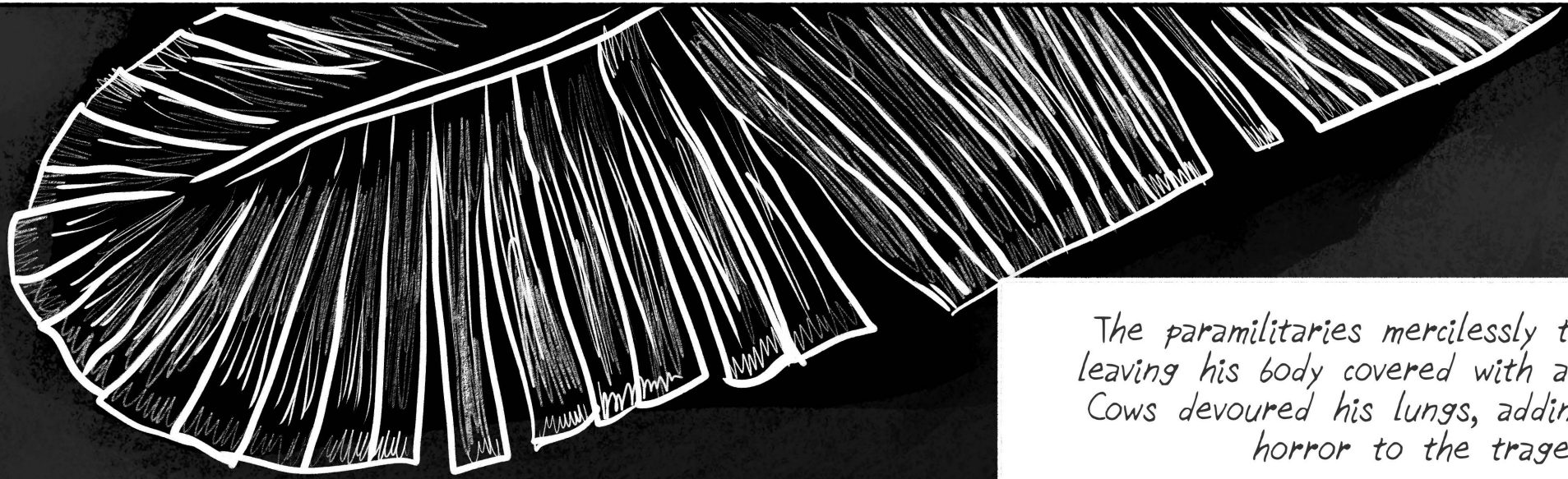
From 1997 onwards, Chiquita paid at least \$1.7 million to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, a violent right-wing group known by its Spanish acronym AUC. The AUC targeted members of the FARC guerrilla and attacked the civilian population, mainly trade union leaders, workers' associations, social organizations, and members and sympathizers of the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica), among others



The Gonzalez family became a heartbreaking representation of the brutality that plagued the communities in the Urabá region. It all began with the brutal murder of David, a man who spent his days working in a banana plantation, in 1997.



That day, at a checkpoint on a farm, David was forced to get out of the bus in which he was traveling with his family. Before the eyes of his loved ones, the paramilitary members violently attacked him.



The paramilitaries mercilessly took his life, leaving his body covered with a banana plant. Cows devoured his lungs, adding even more horror to the tragedy.

The dark shadow of paramilitary violence did not stop there. David's sister-in-law and daughter later became victims of forced disappearance, plunging the family into uncertainty and grief.



Meanwhile, another member of the Gonzalez family, Pedro, found himself in the cruel dilemma of being threatened to leave his home.



Recognized for being a supporter of the Unión Patriótica political party and an owner of his own plot of land, the threat not only sought to expel him, but also to eradicate his roots and identity.



Faced with the rising tide of threats, the Gonzalez family had no choice but to leave their homeland, fleeing far from Urabá in a desperate attempt to find a safe haven.



Even the next generation did not escape the dark fate that stalked the family in their new home.



One grandson experienced violence firsthand when he was taken from his home in the dark of the night and threatened.



*Fear became a constant companion,
and the shadow of violence seemed
to have no end.*



*The chronicle of the Gonzalez
family in Urabá is a harrowing
tale of loss, displacement, and
persistent threat. A story that
reflects the brutality of a dark
time in the region.*



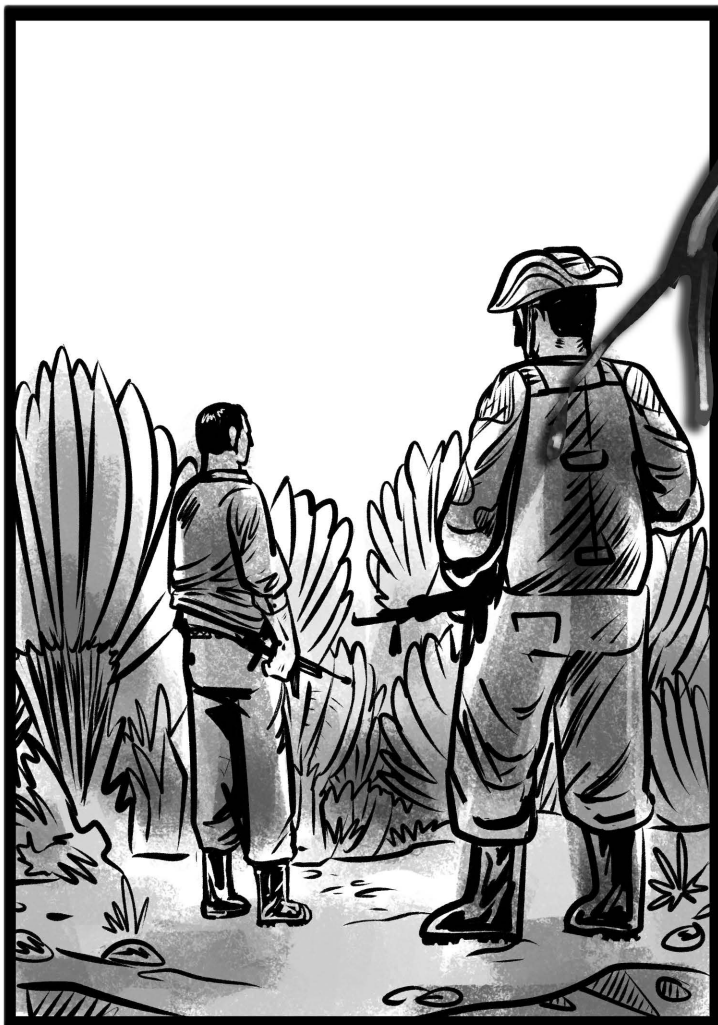
Between 1991 and 2001, Urabá registered 97 massacres with more than 600 victims.



Between 1991 and 2007, 589 trade unionists were murdered in the Urabá region.



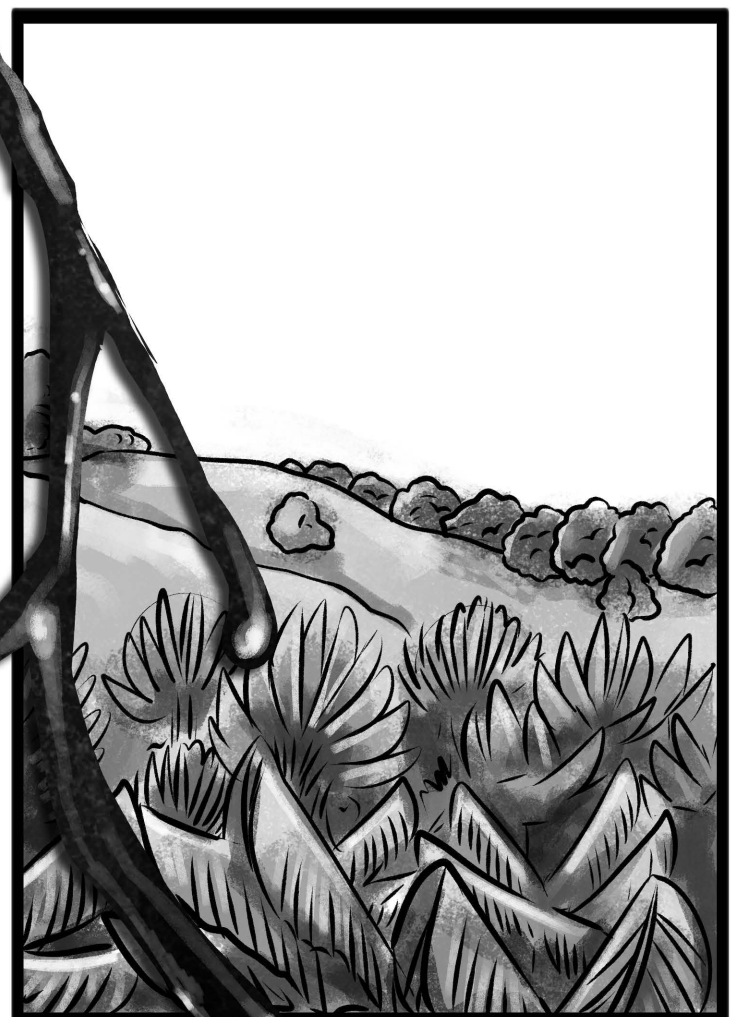
From 1997 to 2004, the AUC was responsible for the displacement of nearly 600,000 people.



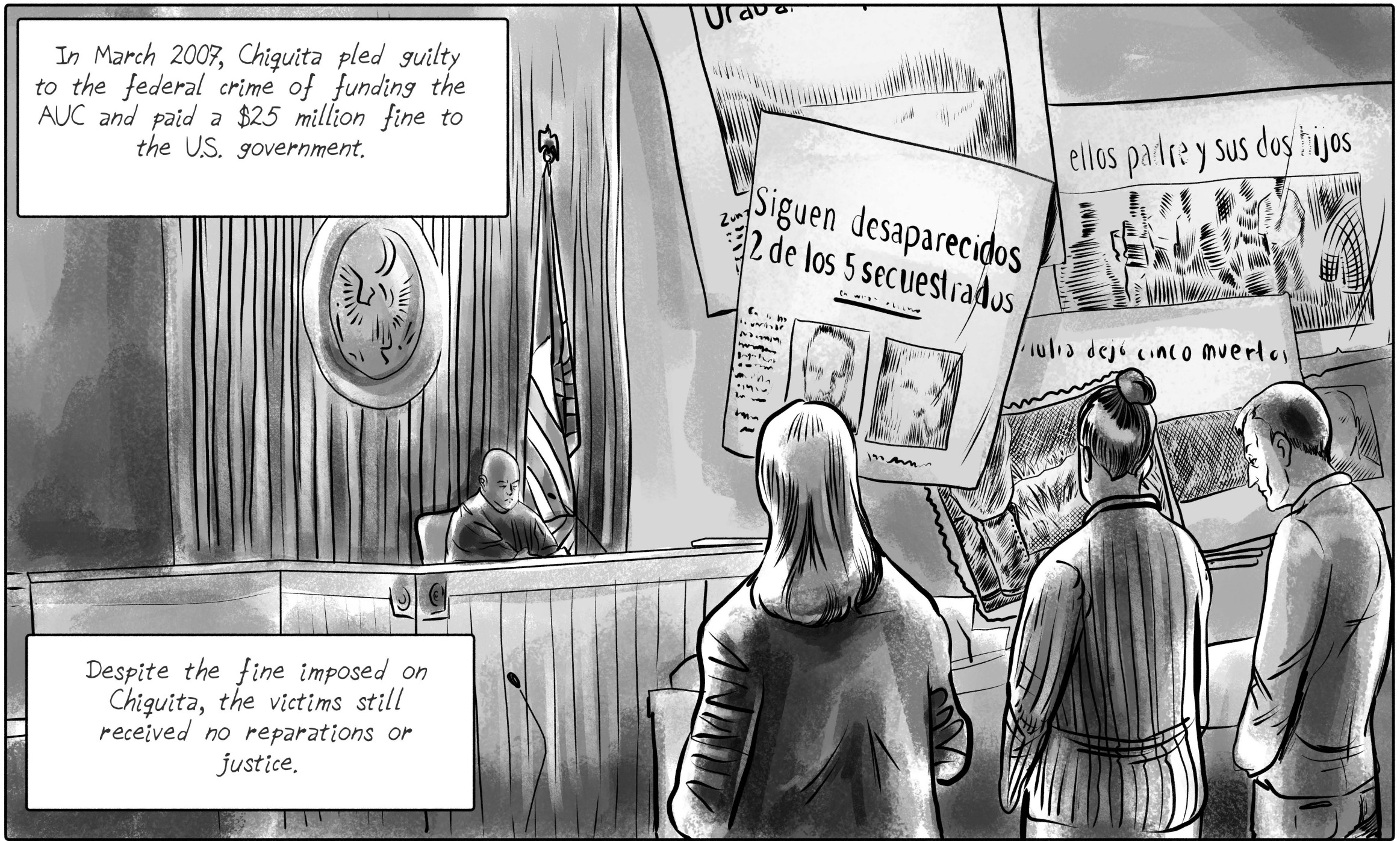
In 1997, after the agreement between Chiquita and AUC...



banana exports increased dramatically, reaching an all-time high of 12 million tons exported.



In March 2007, Chiquita pled guilty to the federal crime of funding the AUC and paid a \$25 million fine to the U.S. government.



Despite the fine imposed on Chiquita, the victims still received no reparations or justice.

In 2007, EarthRights and lawyers with other organizations filed federal lawsuits on behalf of victims.

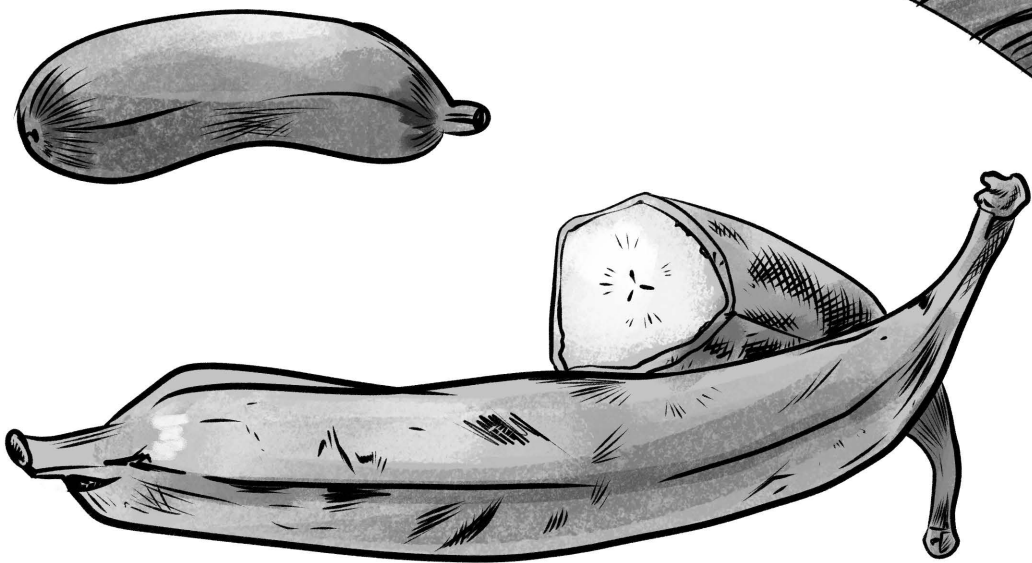


In April 2024, Chiquita will finally go to trial in the first of numerous cases against the company. Thousands are still waiting for justice.

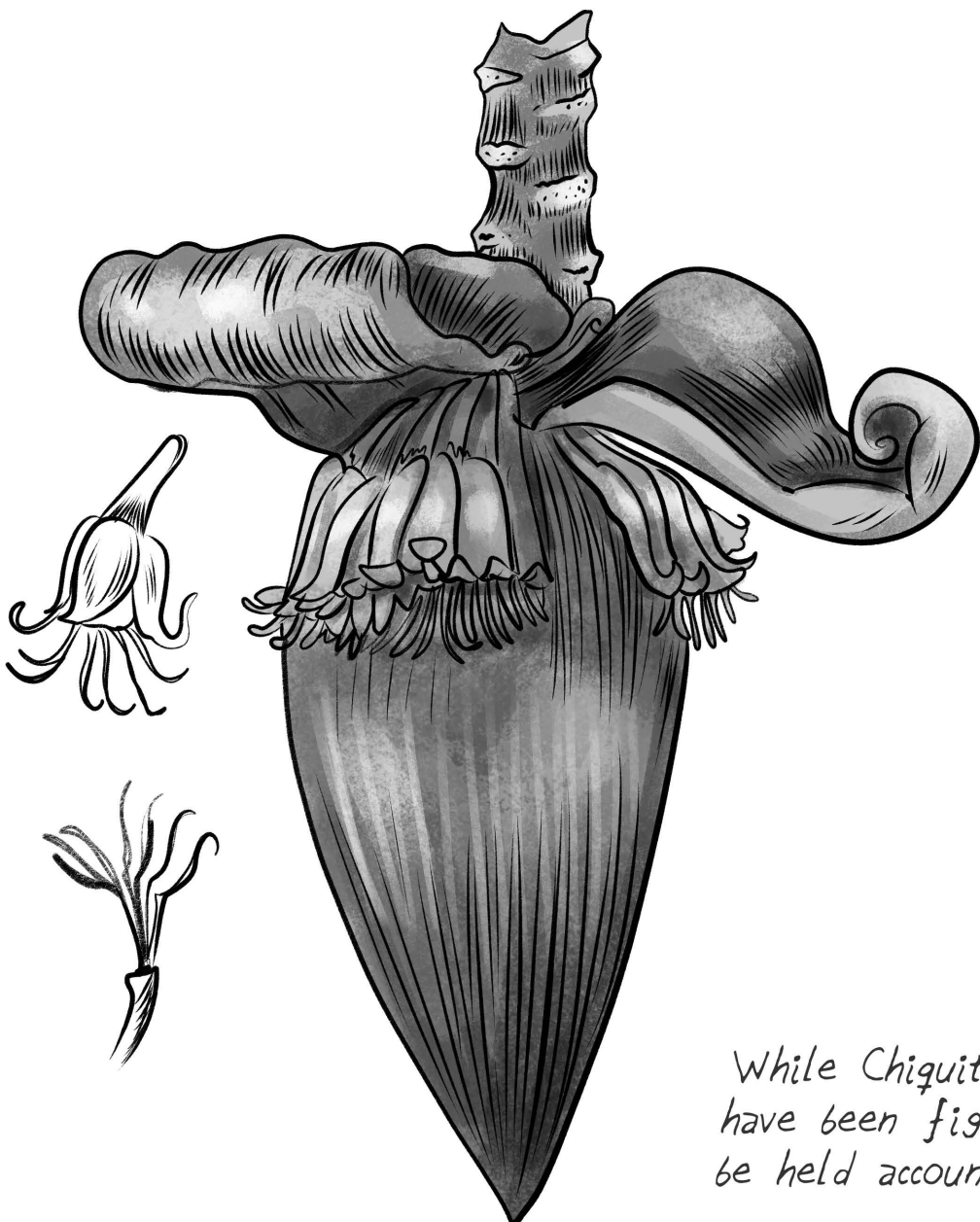
"We want justice for the damage done to our family and to ourselves, because to this day we still feel the displacement."



Chiquita pleaded guilty before the U.S. Department of Justice for funding at least \$1.7 million to the United Self-Defense Forces.



The AUC's involvement in Colombia's armed conflict caused severe human rights abuses including massacres, forced disappearances, and forced displacement resulting in thousands of victims.



While Chiquita has paid a fine to the U.S. government, the victims have been fighting for their day in court for years. Chiquita must be held accountable to the victims of the violence they helped fund.