

Winter 1997-98

us\$3.00

**The Colombian  
Media and  
the Massacre  
in Mapiripán**

# ***Colombia Bulletin***

**A Human Rights Quarterly**



*Six of 19 victims of yet another paramilitary massacre, this one in Horqueta and Viotá, in the Department of Cundinamarca. (Photo: El Heraldo)*

## ***Inside***

- **U.S. Steps Up Military Aid**
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# The Slaughter Continues

Colombia's dirty counterinsurgency war rages on with little hope in sight of a decline, let alone an end, in the violence. In the last issue, we brought you news of the horrible torture, massacre, and mutilation of at least 30 campesinos in Mairipán between the 15th and 20th of July. In this issue, we bring news of yet another massacre of 15 in Horqueta and Viotá. "They were face down, with their hands tied," said a witness at the scene, "with streams of blood and bullet wounds all over, which made it difficult to recognize who they were." Men arrived, heavily armed, and with a list and announced "We are going to kill those that we name." Germán Vélez, Gustavo Martínez, Omar Martínez, Nelson Burgos and Camilos Solono were laid in a row, with their faces on the step in front of the building, and shot repeatedly in the backs of their heads. Among the rest of the dead were two minors, ages 14 and 15. Among the injured was a 62 year old grandmother. The authorities continue to attribute this massacre to "groups of private justice", refusing to call them paramilitaries, despite the fact that one of the victims was able to resist, and killed one of the armed men who was dressed in a military issue camouflage uniform.

A criticism of *Colombia Bulletin* that we have heard is that there is just "too much gloom and doom." That there is never anything "positive," never any "good news." It's hard to publish that which does not exist. The pacification of Colombia is in full force. The pre-fabricated excuses of "drugtraffickers" and "guerrilla subversion" have been institutionalized to allow for the steady extermination of all who desire political, economic and social alternatives.

Perhaps we can find "good news" in that we are slowly bringing to international attention small glimpses of the continuing horror. Any more good news will depend on you, the reader, to help organize opposition to the support being given to the Colombian establishment by U.S., British, Canadian, and other governments and corporations.

The White House's "Drug Czar" Barry McCaffery recently ranted about the scourge of "narcoguerrillas" while visiting the Colombian military hierarchy, claiming the guerrillas were making "hundreds of millions of dollars in the drug trade." To quote from

Carlos Salinas in an article in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, the "narco-guerrilla" argument is essentially false. "It is true, however, that drug traffickers and guerrillas often operate in the same regions and have converging interests. Many guerrilla fronts tax drug trafficking operations, just as they tax anyone in areas they control. Thus some fronts protect the fields of traffickers. But for protection, traffickers also get the help of members of the Colombian security forces. If one is going to advance a narcoguerrilla argument on the basis of sometime converging interests, one should also advance

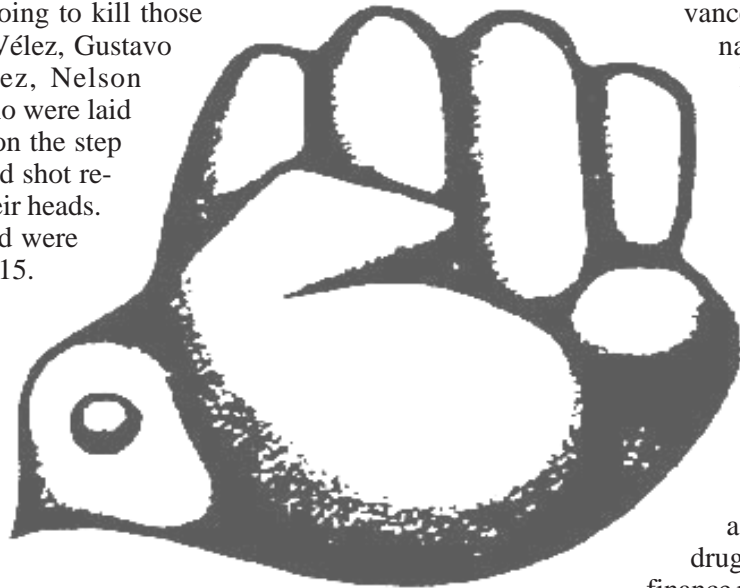
the narcomilitary and narcopolice hypotheses.

Drug traffickers are highly opportunistic and will work with anyone willing to advance their interests.

However, some guerrilla operations, such as kidnapping, put the guerrillas and large drug traffickers in direct conflict, particularly when the drug lords are directly affected. As a result, drug traffickers sometimes finance paramilitary groups and death squads to target actual or perceived guerrilla supporters."

We would like to thank all those who sent us letters and notes with their subscriptions. To answer one writer's concern and question, *Colombia Bulletin* has served us well as an organizing tool. We have sent them for free to interested people throughout the world and many of the various support groups here have found it an excellent hand-out at meetings. *Colombia Bulletin* also complements the many other types of publications, and intentionally goes into more depth than shorter more topical publications such as CSN's *Action on Colombia* or CHRC-DC's *Colombia Update*. All these - plus urgent action notices, one page flyers and petitions, etc - all play critical roles in our organizing. Finally, *Colombia Bulletin* came into being in part at the urging of NGOs in Colombia to provide North America with a regular source of English language news and analysis on human rights in Colombia. We have received much encouragement and support from our friends in Colombia, who consider *Colombia Bulletin* to be well worth the effort.

ML-JF



**Colombia Bulletin**  
"A Human Rights Quarterly"

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**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

John Fournelle  
Michael López

**TRANSLATORS**

Rino Avellaneda  
María Hope  
Jessica Knauss  
David Mond  
Andrea Vergara

**LAYOUT**

Michael López

*Colombia Bulletin* is a magazine that seeks to forge strong connections for information and activism between the U.S., Europe, and Colombia by reporting accurate and up-to-date information on the struggle for human rights in Colombia.

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**Send to:** *Colombia Bulletin*, c/o CSN, P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI USA. Phone (608)257-8753 Fax (608)255-6621

**Submissions Welcome:** (material preferred on IBM format discs). Send to: Michael López, 175 Claremont Ave., Buffalo, NY 14222 USA. E-mail: mlopez@igc.apc.org

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## LETTERS

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

I admire the work you do and the quality of your magazine. I'm Colombian and have lived in New York City for many years. Some of us are slowly realizing what's going on in our country.

RM, New York

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$75 to cover the renewal of our subscription as well as the books *Thy Will Be Done* and *Instruments of Statecraft*. I could also give a hand once in a while doing translations (Span to Eng) - you could e-mail me stuff. Keep up the good work!

David, Troy, NY

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

I really appreciate receiving this journal. Enclosed is a check for my subscription.

Maryfran Barber,  
Detroit, MI

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

I enclosed a donation to help you out. Colombia Bulletin certainly presents the macabre "other side" of the news!

C. Romstead  
Madison, WI

Dear CSN:

Enclosed is my subscription renewal. Colombia Bulletin is too large to use as an organizing tool. Brief, monthly info sheets or urgent actions would be far more useful. Furthermore, wouldn't the money be better spent in Colombia?

Steven Hill,  
Plainsboro, NJ

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

Here is my renewal plus a dona-

tion to help someone who can't afford it. Your publication is a good source of information.

Catherine Holtkamp  
Melbourne, KY

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

I would like to take advantage of your special offer of *Instruments of Statecraft* with a year subscription. My sub is far from used up, but I do want the book and you can tack the sub onto what I have left. My sub address remains the same as in your records, in Guatemala. Thank you. We appreciate your publication here.

Patricia Woodruff,  
Quetzaltenango,  
Guatemala

Dear Colombia Bulletin:

Let me introduce myself as an active member of the Colombo-Ecuadorian Network.

I represent the Llactapura Yanaparishpa project which in quechua language means "Helping Each Other Between Peoples." In this fruitful space there is the participation of various groups from different provinces, such as Chimborazo, Imbabura, Esmeraldas, Pichincha, and Loja.

This is a joint project of the Network, for which reason our colleagues are educators, cultural promoters, former missionaries, artists and refugees.

To support our work methodology, we are in need of Human Rights material in English. We sell our products to solidarity groups in the U.S. and we see it as a necessary corollary to support the struggle against the violation of human rights to inform our buyers of what goes on in other countries, so that they become

conscious of the need to change this violent system which greatly affects the least protected as is the case of the humble people who merely work to support themselves with dignity.

We who form this project are aware of what is occurring in Colombia and we have known that this country is a strategic point for the neoliberal empire.

For this reason we would like to know if the material you write is received by the World Council of Churches in the U.S. If so, please tell us where it is sent, since we would like to forward this information to certain people and groups that do alternative business with us.

With nothing further at the moment and hoping to hear from you, I remain

Sincerely yours,  
Luis Coraquilla

Dear friends:

Congratulations for your work in the U.S.! It's a pity that there isn't more exchange between you and the European groups. We are very interested in receiving the Colombia Bulletin. We would be interested in exchanging our German bulletin "Kolumbein Rundbrief". We could send you the documentation of the Workshop on HR in Colombia we had in September (with European and Col. participation).

Have a nice Christmas and better New Year!

Kolumbiengruppe e.V. and  
German Coordination for  
HR in Colombia



## Bogotá Teachers Strike

Some 27,000 teachers in Bogotá, Colombia, began an open-ended strike on Aug. 27 demanding payment of back benefits owed, more investment in school construction and changes in promotion policies. Also on strike are workers at the Social Security Institute and soccer players with the Independiente Santafé de Bogotá team. Workers at the National Telecommunications Enterprise (TELECOM) were to hold a 24-hour strike on Aug. 29 to protest the planned privatization of the long distance phone service, which is set to take effect on Dec. 15. [ED-LP 8/28/97 from AP]

Meanwhile, the Colombian government sent three negotiators to Mexico on Aug. 23 to hold high level meetings with international representatives of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). [La Jornada 8/24/97 from ANSA, DPA, EFE, AFP, Prensa Latina]. □  
WNU #396, August 31, 1997

## Workers Protest Economic Policies

Some 400,000 Colombian workers held a day of protest on Sept. 3 in Bogotá. The protest was partial, and different labor sectors chose their own tactics: judicial employees demand-

ing wage increases did not work; the black market merchants known as sanandresitos (because many of the cheap imported goods they sell come through the Colombian island of San Andres) held a street demonstration to protest a new law requiring them to legalize their trade; bus operators with buses older than 1980 kept their buses out of service to protest a law requiring them to exchange the buses for newer models; Telecom workers held their second day of protest against the opening up of long distance service to private competition; and workers at the state oil company Ecopetrol went to their jobs but refused to work, partially paralyzing the company with their sitdown strike. The union federations ended the afternoon with a demonstration in the Plaza de Bolivar in Bogotá, in which they pledged to hold a new national strike if the government does not negotiate with them. The unionists also reiterated their rejection of the legalized paramilitary groups known as Convivir, as well as illegal paramilitary groups and the government's neoliberal economic policies, and asked all sides in Colombia's armed conflict to work for peace. In a communique, President Ernesto Samper praised "the democratic and civic-minded spirit demonstrated by the workers and the union leaders." [El Tiempo 9/4/97; ED-LP 9/4/97 from Notimex]



## U.S. Congress Fails To Cut SOA Budget

On Sept. 4 the U.S. House of Representatives narrowly defeated a proposal from Rep. Esteban Torres (D-CA) to cut the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) budget by one fourth. The school—founded in Panama in 1946 and located at Fort Benning, Georgia, since 1984—gives military training each year to about 1,000 officers from more than 15 countries in the hemisphere. SOA Watch, a group that opposes the school, has documented that a high percentage of officers implicated in massacres and other human rights abuses in Colombia, El Salvador and Peru are SOA graduates. Torres' proposal, which would have restored the funding if the school included human rights training and follow-up on graduates' human rights records, was defeated 217-210, a dramatic improvement over last year, when only 175 legislators backed a similar proposal.

Officers from Colombia (9,679) and El Salvador (6,777) have usually formed the largest contingents at SOA, but in the past two years Mexicans have dominated, with 153 in 1996 and 211 this year. □  
WNU #397, September 7, 1997

## Neoliberalism Marches On

On Sept. 15, bidding on Bogotá, Colombia's energy company

*These summaries were produced by the Weekly News Update on the Americas (WNU), 339 Lafayette St, New York, NY 10012; 212-674-9499; email <wnu@igc.apc.org>. http://home.earthlink.net/~dbwilson/wnuhome.html*

was finalized for a total sale of \$2.18 billion, nearly twice as much as expected. The Endesa company of Spain joined with the Chilean companies Chilectra and Enersis to pay \$1.23 billion for a controlling stake in Bogotá Energy Company's distribution operations, while Endesa of Chile—indirectly controlled by Endesa of Spain—agreed to pay \$951.2 million for the power-generating operations of the utility. It was one of the largest sales ever of a Latin American utility. [New York Times 9/16/97 from Bloomberg News] *WNU #399, September 21, 1997*

## Rebels Reject Government Overtures

**A** Sept. 27 communique from the FARC said that there was no progress in peace talks, despite conciliatory words from President Ernesto Samper. Samper was speaking before the United Nations general assembly after being granted a special dispensation to enter the U.S. despite his persona non grata status for his alleged links to drug traffickers; he called on international assistance to help resolve the country's civil war, the oldest in the Americas.

The FARC communique thanked Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela and Spain for offering to mediate in "an eventual Colombian peace process" and said neutral governments "can play an outstanding role" in helping end the war, but added that "at the moment there are no clear advances

**Internet Sites of Interest:**  
<http://www.igc.apc.org/csn/>  
<http://www.igc.apc.org/pbi/colombia.html>

in nearing reconciliation with the present government." Meanwhile, the government mounted a counterinsurgency operation with over 3,000 troops in the Yari plains, but caused no guerrilla casualties. [CNN Online 9/28/97 from AP; El Diario-La Prensa 9/28/97] □

*WNU #400, September 28, 1997*

## Colombian Army Chief Unhurt in Attack

**T**he commander of Colombia's armed forces, Gen. Manuel José Bonett Locarno, was unhurt in a dynamite attack on Oct. 2 near the Caribbean coast city of Santa Marta. Bonett was traveling in an armored car through an uninhabited area between Santa Marta and the tourist beach of El Rodadero, escorted by two other vehicles and two motorcycles, when a remote-controlled 50 kilogram dynamite charge exploded. Several hours later, the FARC claimed responsibility for the attack in an anonymous phone call, saying it was in revenge for the current military offensive against the rebels, dubbed "Destroyer II," which began Sept. 1. The explosion was triggered just seconds after Bonett's group of vehicles passed by; it blew up a separate private vehicle, killing the driver, Rafael Francisco Zuniga, a prominent local businessperson and cousin of Santa Marta mayor Edgardo Vivies. The force of the explosion blew out several tires on the vehicles in Bonett's group, but neither he nor his guards were injured, and they left the area quickly for the nearest military base. [Clarín 10/3/97; La Republica (Peru) 10/3/97 from AFP]

Bonett announced on Noticiero

NTC during the weekend of Sept. 27 that the Destroyer II operation had during the past two months resulted in a tally of 1,600 rebels captured and 652 killed. In a letter dated Sept. 30, Attorney General Alfonso Gomez Mendez asked Bonett to reveal who the captured rebels are, who they were handed over to, on what date and under what circumstances. Defense Minister Gilberto Echeverri responded to the inquiry the same day, informing Gomez that he will be pleased to provide him with all the reports about the captured rebels. [El Colombiano (Medellín) 10/1/97]

According to a Sept. 28 communique from the FARC-People's Army (FARC-EP) secretariat in the "Mountains of Colombia": "Once more the military commanders have lied to the president and to the people about their alleged successes in the operations, when they can only show the capture of one seriously wounded rebel; campesino houses blown up by shrapnel from the bombings; two planes that had already been destroyed and abandoned by the anti-narcotics police six months earlier; several abandoned airstrips which had been bombed some time before; control of the campesino displacement—making all this into a real theater piece, to demand more money from the public treasury, the businesspeople and the U.S." The communique also notes that while the military offensive is allegedly to root out the headquarters of the FARC secretariat, "it is well known that the Secretariat is split up, [that its members are] at great distances from each other." [FARC-EP Secretariat Communique 9/28/97, posted on Internet by the FARC-EP International Commission]

On Sept. 28, rebels from the Na-

tional Liberation Army (ELN) blew up a coal train on Colombia's only privatized railroad line in the northern department of La Guajira. The rail line runs from the El Cerrejon mine to the port at Puerto Bolivar. The dynamite explosion derailed 15 cars and severely damaged the tracks. Less than two weeks earlier, on Sept. 15, the rebels had blown up another coal train on the same tracks, paralyzing coal transport for three days. All of the 15 million tons of coal produced annually at El Cerrejon are destined for the foreign market; the mine is operated by the multinational Intercor corporation in partnership with the Colombian government. [La Republica 9/29/97 from EFE] □

WNU #401, October 5, 1997

## U.S. To Aid Colombia's War Against Rebels?

Reuter has reported that in an interview published on Oct. 12 by the Bogotá daily El Tiempo, White House drug czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey announced that the U.S. is ready to enter a new phase in the war against illegal drugs by joining in the fight against Colombia's leftist rebels. [Reuter 10/12/97] However, in the interview, McCaffrey insisted that he will not propose an aid initiative during his visit. "We have a series of ideas that we are trying to include in the budget for fiscal year 1998, like helicopters and training," he explained. "For now we have renewed the process of support for the police and the army. When I am in Colombia I am going to listen and determine what we can do to support these elements." McCaffrey will be in Colombia Oct. 19-21 for an official visit. [ET

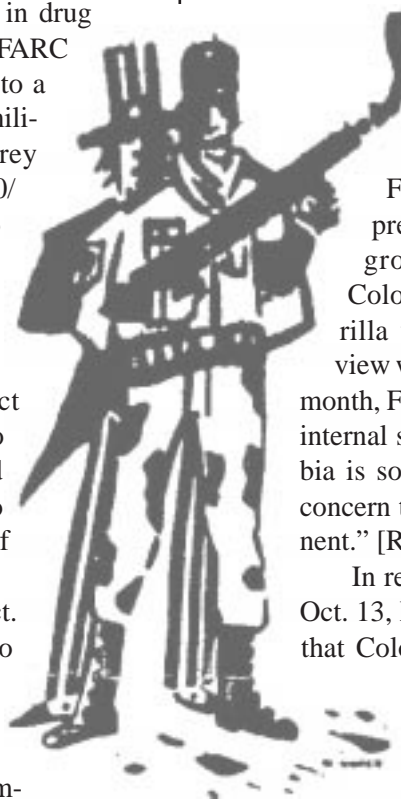
10/12/97]

McCaffrey denied that Colombia's main guerrilla forces—the FARC and the ELN—are politically motivated. [Reuter 10/12/97] "For me it is undeniable that hundreds of millions of dollars in drug money are fueling the FARC and the ELN, and up to a certain point the paramilitary forces," McCaffrey told El Tiempo. [ET 10/12/97] According to Reuter, Colombia's rebel forces deny being involved in the drug trade but concede that they protect peasant farmers who grow coca leaves and "tax" traffickers who work in their zones of influence.

In a speech on Oct. 10, President Ernesto Samper Pizano hailed McCaffrey's visit as a "wind of change" in U.S.-Colombian relations. But in the interview with El Tiempo, McCaffrey—who had once called Samper "the accomplice of international criminals" because of charges that he funded his 1994 election campaign with donations from drug traffickers—emphatically insisted that there was no change in Washington's stance toward Colombia. McCaffrey said the U.S. would continue to pressure Bogotá to toughen anti-drug laws and implement a retroactive extradition treaty to allow Colombian drug traffickers to face trial in U.S. courts. [ET 10/12/97; Reuter 10/12/97]

According to Reuter, "Washington appears to be becoming increas-

ingly worried about the guerrillas' growing military and political might which the Colombian armed forces have been powerless to stem." Reuter notes that "in recent weeks both McCaffrey, who has long-standing



links with Colombia's top army brass, and U.S. ambassador Myles

Frechette have expressed alarm at the growing ferocity of Colombia's long guerrilla war." In an interview with El Tiempo last month, Frechette said: "The internal stability of Colombia is something that is of concern to the whole continent." [Reuter 10/12/97]

In remarks released on Oct. 13, McCaffrey warned that Colombia's rebels are "armed with very sophisticated weapons. They have taken control

of perhaps 40% of the countryside, particularly the parts of the frontier that border on aspects of Venezuela." Deputy National Security Adviser Jim Steinberg noted that the rebels are attempting to block municipal elections scheduled for Oct. 26. "There have been a number of political candidates who have been assassinated by the guerrillas," Steinberg said. "It's not a question, I think at this point, of the government itself collapsing, but it's certainly a very serious challenge in many parts of the country." [Miami Herald 10/14/97]

Until now, the U.S. has channeled most of its anti-drug aid through

the National Police and has avoided giving open aid to the army's counter-insurgency war. [Reuter 10/12/97] On Aug. 22, U.S. ambassador Frechette clarified that U.S. State Department aid being offered to the Colombian army and police can be used in the fight against leftist guerrillas if these groups have some link with drug trafficking. The aid will consist of airplanes, night vision equipment, communications equipment, spare parts for helicopters and all kinds of U.S.-made military parts. [Peace Brigades International (PBI) Colombia Team Informacion-Catorce dias #82 8/11-24/97 from El Colombiano (Medellín) 8/23/97]

[When McCaffrey was first appointed as head of the White House Office of Drug Control Policy, the Mexico City daily *La Jornada* warned that the U.S. seemed to be "adopting preventive strategic methods" to ward off "political and social instability" in Latin America, using the fight against drug trafficking as a "pretext for interventions in the region." See Update #315.]

On Oct. 17 Colombian media released a brief communique received by fax, allegedly from the FARC's southern front, in which the group announces it will allow "the normal development of the parliamentary elections on Oct. 26." The communique gave no reasons for the decision. [El Diario-La Prensa 10/18/97 from AP] The same day, the southern front of the FARC-People's Army released a communique from "the mountains of Caqueta" dismissing the earlier communique as a fake, produced by "the military intelligence of the state security organizations, in complicity with President Samper." The communique goes on to emphasize that "the

position of the FARC-EP in relation to the upcoming elections continues to be undeniably the same: total sabotage." The communique urged people not to vote and to instead "meet in council meetings and municipal assemblies to begin building a power born of the people." [FARC-EP communique 10/17/97, received via Internet from FARC International Commission]

WNU # 403, October 19, 1997

## Paramilitaries Caught Guarding Drug Labs

An Oct. 7 article in the Miami Herald notes that private rightwing paramilitary armies in Colombia "now appear to be getting into the drug trade," guarding cocaine-processing laboratories and hidden airstrips. The article goes on to cite top anti-narcotics police official Col. Leonardo Gallego, who admitted in an Oct. 6 interview that paramilitary involvement with drug traffickers has been known at least since Oct. 30, 1996, when police raided a cocaine-processing complex in Meta department and found abundant evidence that rightwing paramilitary groups were protecting the operation. [MH 10/7/97]

On Oct. 3, a paramilitary group guarding a shipment of cocaine killed 11 members of a judicial delegation in Meta department. Ten paramilitary members were also killed in the attack and another two were arrested. However, military sources and President Samper attributed the attack to the FARC's 43rd Front. The next day, Oct. 4, at least 17 police agents were killed and four wounded in another ambush in Meta department which

was attributed to the FARC but which may also have been carried out by rightwing paramilitary groups. [Clarín 10/5/97]

Max Alberto Morales, spokesperson for the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC)—a coalition of paramilitary groups—admitted that the Oct. 3 attack was carried out by paramilitary members, but insisted they were renegades acting independently. [MH 10/7/97] The AUC claims that its member organizations have pledged not to cooperate with drug traffickers. [PBI Colombia Team Informacion-Catorce dias #82 8/11-24/97 from El Espectador (Bogotá) 8/14/97] □

WNU # 403, October 19, 1997

## Colombian Voters Face Government Bribes, Rebel Threats?

Regional elections were held in Colombia on Oct. 26, despite an armed strike by leftist rebels and the withdrawal of more than 300 mayoral candidates and more than 10,000 council candidates due to threats. On Oct. 24, the first day of the armed strike, 25 bombs exploded throughout the country and 13 people died in armed conflicts. In addition to ballots to choose 1,071 mayors, 32 governors, 500 deputies and 11,000 council members, Colombians can request an additional ballot for "The Citizen Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty," a referendum on peace promoted by civic organizations and supported by UNICEF.

On Oct. 23, rebels from the ELN kidnapped two election observers from the Organization of American States (OAS)—Chilean citizen Raul

Martinez and Guatemalan citizen Manfredo Marroquin—along with Colombian Juan Diego Ardila, a member of the Human Rights Commission of Antioquia department, while the three were traveling in San Carlos municipality in Antioquia. In a communique handed to the driver who was transporting the observers, the ELN's Carlos Alirio Buitrago Front took responsibility for the kidnapping and said the observers would be released the following week after the armed strike ends. Foreign minister María Emma Mejía and the rest of Samper's cabinet immediately offered to trade places with the kidnapped observers. "It is impossible that the international community should perceive that here in Colombia we don't even respect the sacred character of an international observer," said Mejía. From its headquarters in Washington, the OAS demanded the immediate release of its kidnapped members. OAS spokesperson Jorge Telerman told Buenos Aires daily Clarin that the kidnapping was the worst incident the organization has faced since the end of the cold war. In a communique issued on Oct. 24, the ELN called the kidnapping a "political-military action to sabotage the elections." [Clarín 10/24/97, 10/25/97]

Antioquia governor Alvaro Uribe Velez escaped unhurt on Oct. 25 from a rebel attack in San Francisco municipality, in the same area where the OAS observers were kidnapped. A priest was killed in the same attack. [Clarín 10/26/97] The ELN is demanding the demilitarization of four Antioquia municipalities, including San Francisco, before it will free the two OAS observers. [Diario Los Andes (Mendoza, Argentina) 10/

26/97 from Reuter, AFP; El Tiempo (Bogotá) 10/26/97]

The government is pressuring candidates and poll workers to keep participating in the elections, and has finally given in to demands to provide each of the 350,000 poll workers with a life insurance policy equivalent to 48 minimum monthly salaries, about \$8,000. At the same time, the government is trying to encourage voting by offering a series of incentives to people who vote, including priority entry into university and a 10% discount on tuition; priority in public administration jobs; priority in government credits for housing; a one to two month reduction in obligatory military service; and a half day of paid vacation for public and private workers. The government will also award \$500,000 to the municipality with the highest level of voter participation. [Clarín 10/25/97]

Another less subtle form of persuasion is being exercised in some areas by rightwing paramilitary groups. In a communique circulating in the municipality of Mistrato, Risaralda department, the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia urged people to vote and threatened retaliation against those who abstain. A communique circulating in the same town from the Oscar William Calvo front of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) made similar threats against all those who vote. [El Colombiano (Medellín) 10/23/97]

Meanwhile, the Pascual Bravo Technical Institute, an all-male public high school in Medellín, has been shut down since Oct. 8, when a video forum on revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara sparked a riot and students armed with rocks and firecrackers clashed with police and army

units. Male and female students from other high schools reportedly also participated in the riot. Classes are set to resume on Oct. 28. [EC 10/23/97] *WNU #404, October 26, 1997*

## U.S. To Step Up Colombia Intervention

On Oct. 20, some 100 rebels from the FARC ambushed a group of high-ranking anti-drug police who had just finished destroying a cocaine processing laboratory in Puerto Toledo municipality and were starting to board five police helicopters to leave the area. National anti-narcotics police commander Col. Leonardo Gallego escaped unhurt in one of the helicopters, but his right-hand collaborator, regional anti-narcotics commander Maj. Jairo Alberto Castro, was killed, along with another officer. The attack took place just a day before Gallego planned to take U.S. anti-drug chief Barry McCaffrey to visit the site. [Clarín 10/21/97; Reuter 10/20/97]

On Oct. 19, McCaffrey visited a U.S. radar station on the outskirts of the Amazon jungle town of Leticia, strategically located close to the shared borders with Peru and Brazil and a major cocaine production and transshipment point. McCaffrey also inspected a military base in the area and met with Defense Minister Gilberto Echeverri and Foreign Minister María Emma Mejía. U.S. officials will not say how many radar stations the U.S. has in Colombia and the size of the U.S. contingent that operates them. However, a Western diplomat recently told Reuter that at least 40 U.S. military personnel and Drug Enforcement Administration

(DEA) agents are based in Leticia alone. Leftist rebels say they have detected at least 14 U.S. radar stations and bases in Colombia, and that U.S. agents are providing counterinsurgency training to the military as well as taking a frontline role in the so-called war against drugs. U.S. anti-drug aid to Colombia this year was more than \$80 million, including extra assistance for the purchase of helicopters and other equipment. [Reuter 10/19/97]

In a speech on Oct. 20 at a Bogotá military academy, McCaffrey said both the FARC and the ELN were infested with "narco-corrupted cadres that have turned revolution into little more than a grab for drug dollars." According to Eduardo Gamarra, a Florida-based Latin American political analyst, McCaffrey is deliberately blurring the lines between the war on drugs and Colombia's counterinsurgency war. "What U.S. policy is angling toward is a greater presence of U.S. counterinsurgency advisers in Colombia," explained Gamarra, adding that a large number of U.S. military advisers are already providing counter-insurgency assistance in Colombia. [Reuter 10/20/97]

Colombian armed forces commander Gen. Manuel José Bonett Locarno announced on Oct. 22 that he had been given the go-ahead to use U.S. anti-drug aid to fight leftist rebels. Speaking the day after McCaffrey ended his three-day visit to Colombia, Bonett said he expected the U.S. Congress might even approve a specific counterinsurgency package for Colombia. "The U.S. can give all the aid it likes for counternarcotics operations, and now there's a strategic alliance between drug traffickers and guerrillas," Bonett told re-

porters. "Basically all the money that the United States gives now is for fighting drug trafficking and the narco-guerrillas," he added. "I don't think the day is far away when [the U.S.] Congress decides to back our struggle against the guerrillas," Bonett said. The terms of the so-called End Use Monitoring Agreement, which governs the implementation of U.S. aid, allows anti-drug funds to be used against guerrilla forces that are suspected of links to the drug trade, McCaffrey said. [Reuter 10/22/97] During the week of Oct. 20, a U.S. House-Senate conference was expected to consider a proposal by the House leadership to give Colombian anti-narcotics police an additional \$50 million for four Blackhawk helicopters and related aid. [Associated Press 10/18/97] □

WNU #404, October 26, 1997

### Elections Proceed Despite Violence

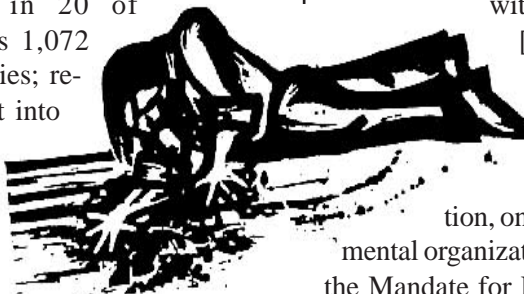
About 9.5 million of Colombia's 20.4 million registered voters cast ballots in regional and local elections held on Oct. 27. National Election Commissioner Orlando Abello confirmed on Oct. 28 that voting was not held in 20 of Colombia's 1,072 municipalities; reporters sent into rebel-dominated zones said more than 150 towns did not vote. [Miami Herald 10/28/97; El Universal (Venezuela) 10/28/97] The government played up the turnout as a victory against leftist

rebels, who had held an armed strike to enforce a boycott of the elections. [Washington Post 10/28/97] The 53% abstention was somewhat lower than in recent years, although not dramatically. Abstention in Colombian elections has generally ranged from 40% to 60%; it reached a high of 70% in the legislative elections of March 1994. [Clarín 10/25/97]

The ruling Liberal Party won 75% of the governorships and 50% of the mayoral posts in Colombia's 32 departments, although it lost the departmental governments of Antioquia, Santander, Norte de Santander and Chocó. The opposition Conservative Party went from holding 18% of the regional governments to 9%, winning in only four departments, while coalitions won in seven. The leftist Patriotic Union (UP), M-19 Democratic Alliance, and the Socialist Renewal Current (CRS) lost several of the regional posts they had won in the 1994 elections. [El Diario-La Prensa 11/2/97 from Notimex] Liberal Party member Enrique Penalosa, who ran on the ticket of the independent "For the Bogotá that we love" movement, won as mayor of Bogotá. The Citizen's Mandate for Peace, a non-binding referendum on an end to violence in Colombia, won with 95% "yes" votes.

[ED-LP 11/2/97]

The ELN reports that the director of the Free Country Foundation, one of the nongovernmental organizations that sponsored the Mandate for Peace, is Francisco Santos, brother of presidential candidate Juan Manuel Santos and co-owner of the Bogotá daily El Tiempo. According to the ELN, El Tiempo re-



ported on Oct. 28 that companies financing the ballot initiative included British Petroleum, which donated more than \$53,000; Occidental, which contributed just under \$2,000; and Shell Oil, which gave only \$350. [ELN Especial del Magdalena for the 2nd half of October]

On Nov. 1, the ELN freed two observers from the OAS and a Colombian government official who it had kidnapped on Oct. 23. The rebels released Chilean Raul Martinez and Guatemalan Manfredo Marroquin, along with Colombian Juan Diego Arcila, to three delegates of the National Conciliation Commission and three representatives of the International Red Cross in the town of Santa Ana, Antioquia department. [ED-LP 11/2/97 from EFE]

Parts of the dismembered body of Colombian journalist Alejandro Jaramillo were identified on Oct. 31 in the city of Pasto in southwestern Colombia. The 67-year old Jaramillo had been deputy director of *Diario del Sur* from two months ago until he disappeared on Oct. 24; his head and torso, severed with a chainsaw, were found a week later. His extremities have not yet been found. Jaramillo, who specialized in legal news, had worked in the city of Cali for the newspapers *El Pais*, *El Caleno* and *Occidente*, and as editor of the newspaper *Extra* in Quito, Ecuador. He had survived two other attacks, one in Cali and one in Bogotá. [ED-LP 11/2/97 from AP] □

WNU #405, November 2, 1997

## Indigenous Leaders Murdered

Bernabela Riondo Pacheco and Santiago José Polo Guevara,

leaders of Colombia's indigenous Zenu community, were murdered on Nov. 2 in San Andres de Sotavento, Cordoba. On Nov. 3, the indigenous communities of Colombia's Cordoba department condemned the killings; representatives of the indigenous council charge that since the murders, members and leaders of the council have received constant anonymous threats warning them that they have eight days to leave the area. The fate of another Cordoba indigenous leader remains unknown: Virgilio Rafael Cardenas Feria, who was national director of the Colombian Indigenous Movement (MIC), has been missing since he was forcibly abducted by a group of armed men on the night of Oct. 31.

Members of the San Andres de Sotavento reservation said that "heavily armed men who presented themselves as members of the army" [or possibly of the Dijin, a police intelligence organization] had taken Riondo and Polo from their homes. Riondo was an indigenous governor and leader of the reservation; Polo was an artisan and a healer. Until 1994 Riondo served as a member of the board of directors of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), and at the time of her death she was a member of the board of directors of the Regional Autonomous Corporation of the Valleys of Sinu and San Jorge.

Indigenous senator Gabriel Muyuy said the same "dark forces" were responsible for Cardenas' disappearance and for the murder of Riondo and Polo. Muyuy said he will ask the government, the National Conciliation Commission and the International Committee of the Red Cross (CICR) to intervene to try to

get Cardenas back alive. According to a Zenu communique, Nilson Zurita, elected on Oct. 26 as indigenous council member of San Andres de Sotavento, has left the reservation because the same armed men who killed Riondo and Polo went to his house to look for him. [El Colombiano (Medellín) 11/4/97, 11/5/97]

Zurita and three other Zenu leaders elected on Oct. 26 in San Andres de Sotavento charged on Nov. 3 that they are receiving death threats from paramilitary groups. Zurita told RadioNet that the men who came to his house on the night of Nov. 1 "certainly were paramilitaries that wanted to kill me." "They came to look for me, and because they didn't find me, they attacked my brothers and my wife," said Zurita. [El Diario-La Prensa 11/4/97 from EFE]

At least 70 members of the Zenu tribe have been murdered since 1975 in a wave of violence attributed to settlers seeking to take over Zenu land. The only person to serve jail time for any of the murders is William Alberto Tulena Tulena—a cousin of Senator Julio Cesar Guerra Tulena—who was sentenced to 55 years in prison for the May 27, 1994 massacre of four Zenu in San Andres de Sotavento. [El Colombiano 11/5/97] □

WNU #406, November 9, 1997



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Today*



### Activism Report

*The following are based on excerpts from the October monthly memo produced and electronically distributed by the diligence and hard work of a Midwest activist. It is intended to give a sense of the activities of some of the groups loosely forming the Colombia Human Rights support network in the U.S., and also to report about pertinent activities/happenings over the world and in Washington and Colombia. The idea is to keep us informed about each other's existence, to cooperate with each other's efforts where possible and to let new people in on the fact. If you would like to receive the monthly memo, send a message to <mlopez@igc.apc.org>.*

#### Group Reports

##### **Colombia Media Project:**

An emergency public forum was held at Hunter College (NYC) on Wednesday, October 8th. Speakers included Chief of the U'Wa People, Roberto Cobaria, Abadio Green Stocell, president of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), and Terence Freitas, of the group Defense of the U'Wa People. The forum called attention to the latest chapter in the ongoing conflict worldwide between multinational oil interests and the rights of indigenous groups to protect their natural territories - reduced as they already are - from further degradation.

##### **Colombia Support Network:**

Several people returned from the

August delegation to Urabá imbued with a heightened sense of urgency at the desperate situation there. The escalation of paramilitary activity was everywhere evident, beheadings of marked individuals was pervasive, there was evidence of concerted action between NW "self-defense" groups and recent massacre activity in the southeast of Colombia. Guerrilla action was not devoid of violence. The civilian population stands little chance. Two things are critical: the need to influence U.S. foreign policy, and the need to provide international solidarity that validates the hope and courage of the few trying to take a stand for a civilian space. In the midst of a situation hopelessly polarized internally into violent action and counteraction, and in the absence of any presence from the central government other than military oversight, the only project for peace in the area are the *Comunidades de Paz* which seek to declare neutral zones for civilian living. A concern heard repeatedly by members of the delegation was the request for international accompaniment in this endeavor, which is under fierce attack.

CSN just established the "CSN Urgent Action Service" in conjunction with the St. Louis-based Human Rights Action Service — to be able to release a flurry of letters at key moments to try and influence decision makers. The service sends out letters and faxes to Colombian and/or US military and civilian authorities in the name of subscribers, on current cases identified by CSN. This is a way for busy people to make an effective con-

tribution; if you know anyone who might be interested in subscribing, please request an information brochure from CSN at [csn@igc.apc.org](mailto:csn@igc.apc.org).

There was also good attendance at the September Midwest Regional Networking Meeting in Champaign-Urbana. Activists from California and Oregon flew and took the Greyhound to be able to meet with Midwest activists. In addition to the opportunity to meet others with similar interests, reprints of recent articles and newsletters plus videos were available to assist in outreach. The establishing of a formal network of member groups with a central office in Madison was discussed and by-laws for the formation of such a network were hammered out.

Two new local Colombia support committees have been formed. The first, in Champaign-Urbana, came about as a result of the conference. The new group, Solidarity for Human Rights in Colombia, is registered as an official student organization at the Univ of Illinois; plans for the coming year include an educational campaign for the campus and community, fundraising, working with the Chicago committee on human rights issues for Afro-Colombians, and investigation of multinational investment in Colombia and its links to human rights violations.

The second committee developed off of interest by activist students and staff at the University of Oregon in Eugene, who learned about the situation in Colombia via surfing the internet and coming across CSN's web page. They will be working with the San Jose de Apartado Comunidad de Paz.

### Colombia Human Rights Committee-Washington, DC:

The Committee is hosting the Colombian visitor for the fall speaking tour. Pedro Arenas is founder and leader of the youth organization Organizacion Juvenil de San José del Guaviare, as well as member of the municipal council, co-chair of the Civic Movement of Guaviare, and, in the past, organizer for the 1991 Constituent Assembly and a mediator between the government and peasant groups during the massive peasant marches of 1994 and '96 in southern Colombia. On October 26 he traveled to Burlington, then Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami and LA.

Pedro Arenas called attention to the harmful effects of the aerial spraying of coca crops to the local subsistence economy and to health, the serious abuse of human rights as conflicts escalate between civilians and the army over protest of conditions in designated areas of public order, and the complicating presence of guerrilla groups in the area. These topics become relevant to the U.S. audience because of the involvement of the U.S. government with military aid, technical assistance, pressure on the Colombian government to help show results in the war on drugs, and ready willingness to join in the Colombian government's alarm over perceived subversion.

(As we go to press we learn that a delegation, organized by CHRC-DC and WOLA, will take members of the DC-based Latin America Working Group [LAWG] to Colombia.)

#### *Sign-on Letter Released*

Human Rights Watch/Americas released a letter by key members of Congress to Colombian Ambassador

Juan Carlos Esguerra on October 16. The letter [signed by Senators James Jeffords R-VT and Daniel Patrick Moynihan D-NY, and Representatives Tony Hall D-OH, and Constance Morella R-MD representing the bipartisan, 125-member group Congressional Friends of Human Rights Monitors] enumerates a string of recent incidents [the May 19 assassination of Mario Calderon Villegas and Elsa Constanza Alvarado Chacon; the death threats and 1996 assassinations of congressman Pedro Malagon and of Josué Giraldo, founder of the Meta Civic Committee for HR; the discovery June 6 of the body of disappeared Jaime Ortiz Londono, founding member of the HR Committee of Segovia, Antioquia, in a mass grave; the June 24 bombing of the building in Medellín housing the regional office of ASFADDES (Association of Relatives of the Detained and 'Disappeared') which destroyed all the organization's files and archives] and asks that the Colombian government take steps to prevent further harassment and intimidation of Colombians working for CINEP as well as other advocates struggling to promote human rights.

An activist from Philadelphia, Helene Pollock ([hpollock@haverford.edu](mailto:hpollock@haverford.edu)), participated in CMP's summer delegation to Cauca. She described it as "a challenging and moving experience" of learning about the special approach used by Indigenous groups members of CRIC as they deal with issues of land ownership, human rights, education, environmental concerns and autonomy for their communities. She has made three presentations locally, utilizing a stimulating video developed by a delegation member. She continues to support networking among In-

igenous people, North and South, through work of the American Friends Service Committee. She has also organized the Philadelphia leg of Pedro Arenas' speaking tour (see above). Pedro will spoke with people from such organizations as the WILPF, the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, Central American solidarity groups, neighborhood-based community groups, churches, colleges and universities.

Our friends in Iowa City used two items this fall for outreach on Colombia: the SOAWatch drive to collect signatures for closing the School of the Americas (to be presented by Roy Bourgeois & others at Ft Benning this November) and Liam Mahoney's speaking tour to promote PBI's important work of accompaniment through publicity of the recently published book *Unarmed Bodyguards*. They have made some valuable connections, but it's slow going and one person at a time. They feel the need to reach outside the student community for some more sustained commitment. They nevertheless generated around 100 letters and copies on four Urgent Actions on Colombian cases at a recent AI campus events.

#### *In The Planning Stages*

CSN-Madison is planning Spring delegations to Colombia with a goal of developing sister communities in the U.S. with towns there designating themselves Comunidades de Paz. It is hoped delegates will represent groups in the U.S. interested in developing relationships of solidarity with a particular community.

□



## **Josué Giraldo Remembered**

**W**reaths of flowers were placed before Colombian embassies in capital cities throughout the world - Barcelona, Brussels, Leningrad, Lima, London, Madrid, Montreal, Ottawa, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, Toronto, Tegucigalpa and Vienna - on October 16, in memory of Josué Giraldo and in protest of continuing human rights violations and impunity.

Giraldo was murdered on October 13, 1996 by a paramilitary hitman, likely acting under the orders of the XII Brigade in Villavencencio and/or paramilitary-chieftan and narcotics trafficker Victor Carranza. Josué was the president and founding member of the Meta Civic Committee for Human Rights, nearly all of whom have been murdered, disappeared, or have fled the country. He was also a vocal leader of the Union Partiotica (Patriotic Union or UP) political party. Josué was the 611th leader of the UP to be killed in the Department of Meta. Over 4,000 have been killed nationwide since the party was founded in 1985. No one has been arrested for the murder, and seems likely to end up in impunity with nearly all of the party's victims. When contacted for an update on the status of the case, the Colombian Embassy in Washington, DC could only report that "investigations are on-going."

In Toronto, about 20 people marched in front of the Colombian Consul with photos of murdered and threatened Colombian activists. An activist from the Canadian Auto Workers called violence against unionists in Colombia "far worse than in South Africa under apartheid. Michael López, who witnessed Josué's murder, denounced impunity in this and other UP murders, and

called for an end to U.S. and Canadian political and military support for the Colombian armed forces. And Luisa, a Colombian exile and member of the Canadian Colombian Association, spoke on violence against community activists and called for international solidarity with Colombia.

In Brussels the European Parlia-

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***"We must clip  
the wings of  
impunity so that  
life can soar."***

*Josué Giraldo*

---

ment held an act in support of all defenders of human rights. It was held on the year's anniversary of the assassination of Josué, who two years ago had given testimony to that body on the deplorable situation for human rights in Colombia. Before a full house, an emotional tribute was paid and a variety of speakers emphasized the urgency of the current state of affairs.

Ms. Osiris Bayther director of the Comité Regional por los Derechos Humanos del Magdalena Medio (CREDHOS) denounced the growing obstacles to the work of her organization in Colombia, and while thanking the European Union for its economic assistance, requested a more emphatic political support which she considers indispensable for resolving the crisis. Mr. Belén Torres, president of the peasant organization ANUC-UR underlined the need for social reforms based on a true agrarian reform.

Representing Amnesty International, Ms. Marike Raadstake indicated that there has been no real progress in the fight against impunity and announced that the issue of Human Rights in Colombia will have priority on the agenda for the meetings of the Committee on Human Rights in Geneva next April 1998. Mr. Fernando Mejia, adjunct director of the World Organization against torture clarified that the UN has called for the abrogation of legislation authorizing the rural cooperatives Convivir, and not merely their suspension or their regulation, as is being interpreted by the Colombian government.

Mr. Philippe Pepin, secretary of CNCND, the National Center for Cooperation for Development, expressed his surprise at two things from an interview held the evening prior with María Emma Mejia, the Colombian Minister of Foreign Relations: (1) The government's recognition of the seriousness of the violations to human rights, but it's lack of recognition of its own responsibility in them. (2) That the minister spoke of amnesty and not of impunity and justice. Mr. Willy Thys, president of the World Federation of Labor, denounced the assassinations of more than 2,500 labor leaders in Colombia, as well as the ill-treatment received of late by members of the oil workers and telecommunications unions.

Statements by various deputies followed, including the need to support politically all recommendations issuing from the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Bogotá. Quoting Josué Giraldo's phrase: "Cortemosle las alas a la impunidad, para que vuele la vida...", Mr. Alonso Puerta, president of the group of the European United Left, stated, "We know of the paramilitary groups and of the Convivir who act for death. We will not be silent witnesses." □

## **Murder and Persecution of Human Rights Activists From Antioquia**

**W**e, the undersigned Organizations and Social Sectors, members of the non governmental AdHoc Committee for Action and Protection of Human Rights Activists in Colombia, denounce the persecution of human rights activists from Antioquia by the military, judicial and civil authorities of the area, to the pertinent national and international organizations.

The authorities have failed, against their public duty, to acknowledge the legitimacy of the “non-governmental human rights organizations” (Presidential Instruction No. 011, July 1997). Specifically they do not acknowledge the legitimate role of the human rights organizations, that is: 1) to report and denounce human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations to the relevant national and international organizations; and 2) to provide a legal sanction against those who are or are presumed to be acting illegally.

This accusation is based on the following facts:

1. There are several law suits and investigations against “Semillas de Libertad”, a human rights collective of 15 organizations from the department of Antioquia (CODEHSEL), for doing their job as human rights defenders. The CODEHSEL investigation is based on a report from Military Intelligence, presented by the 6th Battalion of the 20th Brigade, which categorically states that this regional coordinator of social and human rights organizations is a “facade for subversion”. This same report points out that “some of the members of CODEHSEL supervise and accompany the development of the various legal suits that the judicial system has put forth against individuals linked to subversion, whom they call ‘political prisoners’. For this reason it is frequent to see a member of Semillas de Libertad hindering the development of the legal processes using tricks and other fraudulent stratagems.”

The above mentioned report is accompanied by statements made by Military Intelligence which allege that CODEHSEL and its members have staged human

rights abuses by the public security forces, aiming to establish various lawsuits against the state. “At the same time, they promote accusations through organizations like Amnesty International and through reports to the United Nations.” It also charges that the Semillas de Libertad collective is in charge of exerting pressure on the civilian and military authorities to support the extremist movements, promoting forums, meetings, demonstrations and libelous investigations in addition to aiding trade unions and working class activism.

2. Also, General Rito Alejo del Rio, commander of the XVII Brigade, in a similar report states: “as is known



the subversive movements comprise an armed wing and a political wing represented by the leftists and supported by the different organizations that they control, especially in their areas of influence like the Human Rights Office, who in turn are supported by national and international nongovernmental organizations.

3. Along the same lines the governor of Antioquia, Alvaro Uribe Velez, has disqualified the legitimate role of the human rights organizations abroad, labeling it “guerrilla diplomacy”. (ex. El Tiempo, August 2nd 1997. page 3A).

4. As a consequence of the above reports and pronouncements, four lawsuits have been brought in the offices of the Delegate Attorney to the military garrisons during the month of August. For this reason the following people have been arrested as a result: Ana Herminta Rengifo Durango, vice-president of the National Association of Solidarity Assistance (ANDAS) and Jorge Leon

Giraldo Osorio, ex-director of the agricultural labor union SINTAINAGRO. Three more arrest orders have been made against three other ANDAS leaders- Martha Ines Zapatta, Gustavo Arenas Quintero and Gerardo Nieto Yanten. The lawyer Bayron Ricardo Gongora Arango, a defender of human rights and political prisoners, member of the Liberty Juridical corporation, has also been linked to the process.

Another investigation has been established against the Human Rights Committee coordinator of the Segovia municipality, Jesús Ramiro Zapata; the political prisoners' lawyer William Garcia Cartagena and the president of the Community Professional Services Corporation (Sembrar), Blanca Lucia Valencia, and against all the members of the 15 human rights organizations that comprise CODEHSEL.

5. These events are part of a strategy of persecution against the human rights activists of Antioquia, who have been subjected to murder attempts, threats, harassment and arrest during the period of May, 1996, to August 1997.

6. The critical situation for the human rights defenders from Antioquia is also true for many other human rights activists throughout the country; some recent examples are the following:

Many members of the regional organizations that carry out the Social and Economic Reconstruction program for the Displaced Population program, in the northwest of the country, sponsored by the European Community, have been subjected to warrantless searches, murder attempts, harassment and persecution. Two of such cases are members of the REDES Corporation in Bucaramanga and members of the Headquarters for Cooperative Services CENCOOSER in the province of Ocaña.

The 32 year old president of ANDAS: Cartagena, Teudulo Ignacio Sibaga, born in Mutata (Antioquia) and father of five children, was murdered on September 24 by two men dressed in civilian clothing. He had already been threatened and for this reason in October 1996 he had moved from Riosucio (Chocó) to Cartagena.

Members from the José Alvear Restrepo lawyer association have repeatedly been accused in military intelligence reports, threatened and harassed for defending human rights and legally representing political prisoners. The Lawyer Miguel Puerto, has recently been

threatened for initiating various lawsuits against the military authority for human rights violations.

Based on the above, we ask that the International Community urge the Colombian Government to:

1. Effectively guarantee the legitimate exercise of human rights defense according to what has been established in Presidential Instruction No. 11 of July of 1997, both in relation to the actions of public officials as to the ones of private individuals. Also to guarantee life, physical integrity and liberty to all the human rights activists in the country.

2. Guarantee the respect for the proper process and the judicial rights in the lawsuits set forth against the human rights defenders. We specifically request that the investigations be performed by a special committee of non-faceless attorneys, that the proof be precise and with clear foundation and that no anonymous witnesses be used.

3. Supervise the intelligence activities performed by the military and police authorities and by the state security institutions, related to the legitimate role of individuals or organizations who defend human rights, and particularly to supervise the files compiled as a result of the investigation concerning such activities.

Lastly we urge the international intergovernmental and nongovernmental human rights organizations to provide permanent vigilance on the completion of the above requests. □

**SIGNED:**

*AdHoc Committee for Action and Protection of Human Rights Activists in Colombia:*

*Permanent Committee for Defense of Human Rights  
Colombian Commission of Jurists*

*Committee in Solidarity with Political Prisoners CSPP  
Association for Alternative Social Promotion MINGA  
Corporacion Servicios Profesionales Comunitarios  
SEMBRAR*

*Center For Research and Popular Education CINEP*

*José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers Collective*

*International Children's Defense DNI*

*Manuel Cepeda Foundation*

*Utopias Magazine*

*BENPOSTA Colombian National Youth*

*National Association for social assistance ANDAS.*

*Corporacion Juridica Libertad*

*Human rights collective "Seeds of Liberty" CODEHSEL*

*Instituto María Cano ISMAC*

*Latin American Institute for Legal Service Alternatives ILSA*

# Gay Activist Seeks Asylum in the U.S.

By *Sven Gomez*

I am homosexual and was an outspoken gay writer and activist for human rights for gays and others considered “abnormal” in Colombia. My sexual orientation and my outspoken criticism of the assassination, disappearances and torture of gays, transvestites, and homeless put my life in danger. From 1986-1990 I received numerous telephone death threats which referred to my being gay. Other gay friends who worked in support of human rights also received death threats and most of them have been killed. One by one, all of my friends and colleagues in the gay liberation/human rights movement have been killed. I am the only survivor out of the eight original founders of the Gay Liberation Movement in Colombia.

Police detectives are responsible for the majority of assassinations of gays and transvestites in Colombia since they see it as their responsibility to eliminate anything and anyone who is not “normal.” They consider anyone who is not “normal” to be a subversive, and the worst type of subversive is an intelligent homosexual. Therefore, anyone who denounces the violation of the human rights of gays, transvestites, etc., is in danger of being killed. Outspoken and visible gays often use pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. I used a pseudonym when I wrote articles in a gay newspapers. Other gays I knew also used pseudonyms.

Daniel Samper Pizano, a journalist and the brother of Ernesto Samper Pizano, the Colombian president, was forced to request political asylum in Spain because he was one of the first to denounce the massacres of gays. He had written an editorial column called “Reloj” in *El Tiempo* newspaper. Three other journalists who strongly criticized the police tactics were forced out of Colombia for speaking honestly about the assassination of gays and the homeless and about the drug traffickers.

My participation in the Gay Liberation Movement in Colombia began in 1980 when a group of gays would get together for social reasons. However, when gays started being murdered, eight of us organized ourselves

better and founded the Gay Liberation Movement. I handled public relations for the Movement. One of our activities at this point was to write to a European gay magazine, “Spartacus,” asking for letters to be sent to the Colombian president protesting the murder of gays.

In about 1986 the Gay Liberation Movement came “out of the closet” politically in order to denounce the assassinations of gays, transvestites, etc., and to raise the awareness that gays did exist in Colombia and had the same rights as heterosexuals. We did that in about August or September of 1986 when the eight of us led a march of 50,000 people (i.e., unionists, prostitutes, farmworkers, indigenous people) from all walks of life

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***“One by one, all of my friends and colleagues in the gay liberation/human rights movement have been killed. I am the only survivor out of the eight original founders of the Gay Liberation Movement in Colombia.”***

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in Bogotá. The march was named “Sí á la vida,” (Yes to life). We marched to the Plaza Bolívar, where the Presidential Palace is located.

About one month after this march I began receiving threatening phone calls at the home I shared with my parents and sister in Bogotá. The first call came in the afternoon. I answered the phone and heard sounds and then someone said, “Ah, you are the head of those faggots that go to the streets asking for rights. We are going to show you what rights you have.” At first I was only angry at the caller, but then I was scared. However, I thought that that would be it and I wouldn’t hear from them again. Unfortunately, the calls started coming frequently after that. The next call came about one week later. Someone said, “Hey faggot. You better watch your ass.” The next week another call said the same thing. The calls that came from then on started threatening me with death. They said that they would give me the same justice they gave Lorca (he was a gay Spanish writer who was murdered with 3 shots to his but-

tocks).

In about March 1987 I became the first gay in Colombia to get tested for HIV, and I did the test on national television, Channel 7. The purpose of the program was to encourage people to get tested for AIDS since gays in Colombia were not getting tested because of their fear that it was one way for the government to infect the gay population with HIV, ie., through the needles they used to withdraw blood. Since gays saw more and more gays murdered and mutilated without anything being done to stop it, they understandably were suspicious of anything that seemed to their benefit. On national television Dr. Silvia Barreto administered the ELISA test for HIV to me to show that it was a safe procedure.

During the television program I encouraged people to get tested and advised gays to take responsibility for their own health and the health of others. I said that gays should be very careful not to infect themselves or other people if they know they have the virus. I explained what precautions they needed to take to protect themselves. That program made me a highly visible gay man.

That same year the seven co-founders of the Gay Liberation Movement and I participated in a second march for human rights (the March of Silence) comprised mostly of academics and university organizations. We marched from the train station to the Avenida Colón and then to the Plaza Bolívar. Although the eight of us had already been receiving threatening phone calls, we still marched. However, we positioned ourselves in the center of the march to protect ourselves. We also talked with union leaders about what we were doing and gave them our names and phone numbers in case anything happened to us they could denounce it publically. We all carried small backpacks with a few clothes in them as we marched so that as soon as the march ended we split up and changed our clothes to make it harder for anyone to identify us as having participated in the march.

I knew to take the threats I was receiving seriously and did what I could to protect myself, but I never stopped my political work and continued writing for *El Ambiente*, a gay paper that eight of us had started in about 1986. I wrote under the pseudonym Julio Rodriguez, in order to disguise my identity, but from the phone calls I received, the pseudonym didn't work. Between 1986-1989 I wrote approximately eight articles for the paper. The paper was sent to the President of Colombia; all of the Embassies in Bogotá; the Ministry of Defense; Ministry of Exter-

nal Relations; International Gay and Lesbian Organization in Stockholm; and Páz y Liberación (Houston, TX). By mailing copies of *El Ambiente*, we hoped to educate a wide range of people about gays and to alert them to the fact that gays were being massacred by the government.

Because of the continuing threats against my life, I was spending most of my time at my mother's farm in Guateque, Boyaca, outside of Bogotá, sometime in 1989. In about March 1989, on a visit to Bogotá, I was detained by the National Security Police (D.A.S.) in the Gay District of Bogotá and my identity documents were confiscated from me. The D.A.S. did a round up in the Gay District, physically and verbally abusing the Drag Queens, kicking their clothing and wigs, and making everyone flee the area without looking back. This happened about seven blocks from the Swedish Embassy, at the intersection of Chile Ave. and Caracas Ave.

During that same period I requested political asylum at the Swedish Embassy in Bogotá. My application for asylum was supported by The Swedish Federation for Gay and Lesbian Rights. I submitted some of the articles I had written about the violation of human rights in Colombia. The Embassy official who attended me asked me for my help in finding information about a gay Swedish citizen who had been seen for the last time on the road to the airport with someone I knew, a gay man named Carlos who had helped the gay movement in Colombia. He showed me a photo of the Swede and asked if I would help them find him. I said that I would be risking my life to try to find him since I would have to go to very dangerous places, like gay bars, etc. These places are dangerous because by going there you are more visible as a gay and that is how many of the gays have been murdered. I have since found out what happened to the Swede and his lover. His family travelled from Sweden to Bogotá to investigate his disappearance and found his body in the "Salto de Tequendama" along with his Colombian lover.

The death threats continued over the entire time I lived in Colombia. In 1989, in order to stay out of sight, I started staying outside of Bogotá in a family home in Guateque a few weeks out of the month. Since this home has no phone or electricity, I could not live there permanently and had to return to Bogotá for supplies, etc.

During the early months of 1990, on one of my visits back to Bogotá, I noticed 4-5 armed men sitting in a

dark-colored Jeep watching my bedroom window. I fled my home by the back door and cut through a neighbor's home to avoid detection by these men. Also in 1990, Luis Eduardo, one of the 8 founders of the Movement, disappeared. Once that happened I was even more afraid and started spending even more time at my mother's farm and going in to Bogotá only once a month to take care of business. Luis Eduardo's disappearance made me realize just how serious the situation was.

The stress of this compounded by what had been happening over the past few years was taking a great toll on me. I decided to get out of Colombia for awhile and visit some friends in Canada. About two months after seeing that my mother's house in Bogotá was being watched, I left for Canada. However, after only one week there I decided to return home to Colombia. I felt strange being out of my country and also felt I had abandoned my fellow gay activists and family. For these reasons I decided to accept my fate and return to Colombia, despite my great fear of living there.

About only one week back in Colombia, I received a phone call saying that they would kill the person closest to me if I didn't leave the country for good. I knew then I was being watched, since these people knew that I had left and returned. I knew that I had no choice but to flee the country for good this time. One month later, in June 1990, I fled Colombia and came to the U.S. About six months later, the Swedish Embassy contacted my family, but my family informed the officials that I no longer lived in Colombia.

From the U.S. I have kept in touch with other gay activists. I have found out that in September 1990, another founding member of the Movement, using the pseudonym "Adrian", was killed. He was crossing Independence Park on his way to his apartment when he was assassinated by three shots from a revolver by agents of DAS. Independence Park was the meeting place of the militant gays. Adrian's body was found in the morgue by his family 3 days later.

In 1991, Guillermo Cortez, a psychologist and professor at the Catholic University in Bogotá, who represented the psychosocial aspect of the movement, was murdered. He suffered from polio and had to go to the baths for treatment. One night after the bath he called his lover to say he was coming home. As he was walking down the street a van stopped and pulled him inside. His body was later found in the morgue in Bogotá with bullet holes. The university said that he had died of AIDS.

On April 29, 1995 I found out that Fernando Martinez

Plata, another co-founder of the Movement, had disappeared and his telephone has been disconnected. I now believe that I am the only survivor of the original founders of the gay movement in Colombia.

From 1989 until the time I left Colombia I spent most of my time in Guateque without a phone, electricity, etc. I was forced to travel about once a month to Bogotá to get supplies, etc., and did so at risk to my life since the only access to the farm in Guateque

was by horse, and then a bus to the capital. I knew that sooner or later I would be killed. I also knew that I could not continue to live as a prisoner without a phone or electricity for the rest of my life. I was well known throughout Colombia because I had travelled to the major cities of Cali, Medellín and Pereira to research gay life in these cities for my articles. I also had talked to so many gay communities for my articles and to get people to support our work for human rights. I knew that to remain in Colombia meant that I would have to live like a prisoner and under constant stress of being killed. As one by one of the founders of the Movement have been killed or disappeared, it is certain that it was only a matter of time before I, too, would have been killed.

For all of these reasons I ask the United States to grant me political asylum based on my membership in the social group of gays and based on my political opinion as one who has been an outspoken critic of the Colombian government's violation of the human rights against gays, transvestites, the homeless, etc. □

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***“About only one week back in Colombia, I received a phone call saying that they would kill the person closest to me if I didn't leave the country for good. I knew then I was being watched, since these people knew that I had left and returned.”***

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## Losing Ground: Human Rights Advocates Under Attack in Colombia

*The Washington Office on Latin America issues its 61 page investigative report on human rights abuses in Colombia.*

On May 19, 1997, four men burst into the home of Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado and gunned them down. Elsa's father, Carlos Alvarado, was also killed in the attack. The couple had worked for many years as researchers at one of Bogotá's best known think-tanks and human rights organizations, the Jesuit-run Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP). Both participated in an environmental project in a town neighboring Bogotá and taught in local universities. Their deaths have left many — among them environmental activists, human rights defenders, community leaders, professors, and Jesuits — in mourning, and deeply frightened. Most see this killing as a clear warning of things to come. Indeed, in the months following the murders, there was a wave of death threats against human rights activists in Bogotá, forcing several prominent human rights defenders into exile.

While international attention has focused on these murders, this incident was only the most recent of many attacks on human rights activists, ranging from threats and harassment to assassinations. Since October 1996, four nationally-known human rights defenders have been killed, as have 14 members of local human rights committees throughout Colombia and five local human rights ombudsmen. In statements to the press, military and government officials have repeatedly accused human rights activists of being involved with guerrilla movements. These accusations have helped to create a climate of fear and suspicion regarding human rights work in general, and encourage members of paramilitary groups and security forces to view human rights activists as military targets. In some cases, these accusations have led to charges being brought against human rights activists and to their detention and imprisonment.

Over the last decade, as attacks against human rights activists have mounted, human rights offices in many regions of the country have been forced to close their doors. Often operating in a virtual "no man's land," local human rights groups — and the population at large — are provided with no basic security or policing by the state, leaving them vulnerable and without the means to protect themselves. Paramilitary and military operations have

successfully prevented human rights work from going forward in significant areas of the country, such as the Meta region, described in detail in this report. As a result, it is extremely difficult to obtain human rights-related information throughout key areas of Colombia. Colombian human rights activists fear that the paramilitary groups have now turned their sights on Bogotá. The murders of Mario Calderón and Elsa Alvarado, and the wave of death threats thereafter, indicate that even in the capital, human rights workers have reason to fear for their lives.

Government human rights advocates face death threats and attacks as well, forcing some to leave the country. Particularly at risk are investigators with the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General's office, or Fiscalía, and those working with the Ministry of the Interior's social welfare programs for the internally displaced. On a local level, the most vulnerable government human rights agent is the personero, the official within local municipal governments responsible for human rights education and the registration of complaints of human rights abuses. Personeros also assist with criminal investigations. Since March 1996, five personeros have been killed. Most recently, on August 8, 1997, Gustavo Núñez, the personero of San Alberto, Cesar, was killed, only two weeks after publicly denouncing increasing paramilitary activity in his region and criticizing the government for failing to support and protect personeros. His predecessor was killed by alleged members of a paramilitary group in 1995. To date, neither the President nor members of the Cabinet have spoken out consistently or aggressively in support of their threatened functionaries, nor have they offered them adequate protection, reflecting the larger failure by the government to support and protect human rights work.

Colombia's two main guerrilla groups — the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) — are responsible for a litany of abuses as well, including the arbitrary or selective killing of civilians. Those targeted for execution by the guerrillas include people resisting kidnap attempts,

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*To receive **Losing Ground**, please send \$7.00 per copy and \$1.75 postage and handling for the first copy (\$0.75 for each additional copy) to the Publications Department of WOLA at Washington Office on Latin America 400 C Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002. Tel (202) 544-8045 fax (202) 546-5288 <[wola@wola.org](mailto:wola@wola.org)> <<http://www.wola.org>>.*

local government officials, electoral candidates, demobilized guerrillas, and others accused of collaborating with the military. Like the paramilitary groups, the guerrillas target civilians believed to be sympathetic to or in collaboration with the perceived enemy. This has led to widespread killings of civilians by guerrillas, particularly in areas of the country where paramilitary expansion is taking place.

Paramilitary organizations — groups of armed civilians carrying out armed actions, often in partnership or working directly with members of the Colombian security forces — appear to be behind most of the violence against human rights advocates. They have dramatically increased their activities in recent years. Benefitting from the political crisis and institutional inertia generated by the corruption scandal engulfing the Samper administration, these groups have expanded territorial control over vast sections of the country and, for the first time, appear to be operating with a unified national structure. In a marked departure from their previous tactic of developing locally-based groups of armed civilians, recently large paramilitary units have been carrying out offensive campaigns, including military operations in new areas of the country, and have established training camps.

Mounting evidence indicates that paramilitary groups operate with the complicity, and in some regions the direct support, of the Colombian armed forces. Numerous eyewitness accounts have reported joint patrols, as well as the planning and execution of military operations, by Colombian military and paramilitary forces. Throughout the country, few paramilitary leaders have been detained or prosecuted for their crimes. One of the most important paramilitary leaders, wanted for questioning in eight cases of murder, was interviewed in a June 2, 1997 article in *Newsweek*, yet authorities claim to have no information on his whereabouts. Security forces have also failed to combat paramilitary groups with the force with which they attack guerrilla movements. To date, there have been next to no reported instances of combat between paramilitary groups and the Colombian armed forces.

Particularly troubling is the Colombian government's creation of *de facto* paramilitary groups as *Convivir*, groups of civilians who are authorized to carry military weapons and collect military intelligence. WOLA has evidence that in at least one case, a person identified by the Colombian Judicial Police as a well-known paramilitary leader has been legally incorporated into these groups.<sup>1</sup> Human rights groups have received growing numbers of complaints of abuses by members of the *Convivir*, including threats against local inhabitants and

even murder. In mid-August, President Samper himself questioned the role that some *Convivir* are playing and ordered them to be evaluated. At best, by creating the structure for networks of armed civilians, these groups facilitate paramilitary actions. At worst, the *Convivir* are themselves an integral part of the paramilitary strategy, as is evident in some regions of the country where the *Convivir* act in coordination with paramilitary groups.

The creation of the *Convivir* is but one indication of the failure of the Samper administration to adequately address human rights concerns. Two key measures of the government's political will to confront human rights violations are: 1) investigations and sanctions of those responsible, and 2) the provision of protection and guarantees to human rights organizations such that they can effectively carry out their work — a basic tenet of a democratic society. Not only does impunity reign for cases of human rights violations committed by state agents, but the Colombian armed forces systematically impede such investigations and, until now, have routinely absolved their own in sham military trials.

The Samper administration does deserve credit for a number of initiatives. The Colombian government has created an impressive human rights bureaucracy on paper, has arrested a handful of mid-level paramilitary leaders, and has accepted the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Additionally, the Samper government formally adopted Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions and approved Law 288, legislating compensation for victims of human rights abuses in cases brought before international bodies.

Yet when presented with concrete recommendations for action by Colombian human rights groups, the Samper government has often responded with vague promises and limited measures, ensuring the continuing peril of engaging in human rights work in Colombia. The Colombian government's response to the proposals of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) raises concerns about the government's political will to address human rights concerns in a timely and serious fashion and to implement adequate measures for the protection of human rights monitors. While a range of programs exist on paper for protecting human rights monitors, in practice they have been under-funded and poorly designed for the needs of the human rights community. The number of human rights advocates killed in Colombia over the last year provides

Notes:

1. WOLA interviews. 2-20 June 1997. Unless named in the text, individuals interviewed requested anonymity for reasons of personal security.

sad testimony to the failure of these programs.

The Samper government, however, has the opportunity to modify its track record. First, in mid-September it presented a new military penal code to the Colombian Congress which excludes human rights violations — such as extrajudicial executions, disappearances, torture, and rape — from the military court system. If adopted and enforced, the new penal code could significantly scale back the present level of impunity for human rights violations committed by state agents in Colombia. Second, in June 1997 Colombian human rights groups presented the Samper government with concrete recommendations for reforms and initiatives to protect human rights monitors. Consequently, the Samper administration now has the opportunity to work with the Colombian human rights community to implement the proposed measures, which at the time of this writing are still under discussion.

The human rights crisis in Colombia has generated significant concern within the international community. Human rights organizations and international bodies have produced a myriad of reports on the human rights situation in Colombia, accompanied by long lists of recommendations for promoting improvements. The vast majority of these recommendations go unheeded. As a result of international concern, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has opened an office in Colombia — one of only two such local offices in the world — to monitor the human rights situation and promote reforms.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to many European governments, however, the response of the U.S. government to Colombia's human rights crisis has been less consistent. For many U.S. policy-makers, promoting human rights in Colombia is perceived as detrimental to Washington's top priority, fighting the war on drugs. Since the Andean Antinarcotics Initiative was launched in 1989, successive U.S. administrations have downplayed human rights concerns in Colombia so as not to jeopardize antinarcotics assistance and cooperation. All too often, the United States remains silent in the face of both individual atrocities and the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation. At times, though, the administration has spoken out more forcefully — for example, over the first half of 1997 as a result of its efforts to implement stricter human rights conditionality on U.S. antinarcotics assistance laid out in fiscal year 1997's foreign aid bill.

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2. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has five local offices. Three of these were created without a specific mandate from the UN Commission on Human Rights; two others — in Colombia and the former Yugoslavia — were created with a direct mandate from the Commission.

But the administration often backs down when faced with criticism on Capitol Hill, where key committee and subcommittee chairmen are prone to lavishing praise on the Colombian police and armed forces for their antinarcotics efforts. The Clinton administration, fearful of being viewed as “soft on drugs,” has responded to such criticisms by dramatically increasing financial support for those institutions. The Colombian security forces are slated to receive approximately \$100 million in U.S. antinarcotics support for fiscal year 1997 alone. The nature and extent of U.S. security assistance to Colombia is extremely troubling in light of Colombia's abysmal human rights record.

### *Policy Recommendations*

**W**OLA urges the Clinton administration and the U.S. Congress to place higher priority on human rights concerns in Colombia. We believe the following are the initial steps that should be taken by the Colombian government — and encouraged by the U.S. government — to reverse the deteriorating human rights situation in that country.

1. Legislation allowing for the formation of the Convivir should be abolished and those Convivir in existence should be demobilized. With regards to paramilitary groups:

- a) the Colombian government should actively pursue, detain, and try paramilitary leaders for whom arrest warrants have been issued and should actively move to disband existing paramilitary groups; and
- b) military and police personnel implicated in paramilitary activity should be investigated, sanctioned appropriately if found guilty, and removed from active service.

2. Measures should be taken to strengthen the investigation of human rights abuses by all sides in the Colombian conflict. These include:

- a) making the Human Rights Unit of the Fiscalía (Attorney General's office) a permanent body constituted by law; and
- b) expanding the investigative capability of the Unit by allocating more investigators and a larger budget, to allow it to increase its technical capacity and undertake investigations in remote regions.

3. Military and police personnel found to be responsible for human rights violations should be removed from ac-

tive service and receive punishments commensurate with the gravity of the crimes committed. Toward that end:

- a) the Colombian Congress should approve the new military penal code presented by the Samper government, which should strongly advocate its adoption; and
- b) the Colombian government should ensure that the new military penal code, if passed, is effectively enforced.

4. Civilian oversight of the police should be strengthened through the placement of the National Police under the Ministry of the Interior, rather than under the Ministry of Defense as is currently the case.

5. Given the gravity of the situation of internally displaced persons in Colombia, guarantees should be provided to communities under threat that further displacement will be prevented. Those who are displaced should be provided with special protection and adequate economic resources.

To provide for the protection of human rights advocates and to ensure that they are effectively able to carry out their work, the Colombian government should:

1. Adopt in full the proposals presented by the Colombian NGO community to the Colombian government on June 16, 1997 to prevent and investigate attacks on human rights monitors, to provide effective protection to people at risk, and to educate the public and government employees about human rights work.

2. Issue public statements repudiating unfounded accusations by government officials or members of the security forces linking human rights workers with guerrilla movements. Should evidence of any such links exist, it should be presented to the appropriate judicial authorities and investigated accordingly. The Colombian government should also take actions to prevent intelligence agencies from targeting legitimate human rights work.

3. Increase the resources allocated to government human rights offices so that they have the budgetary capacity to fulfill their functions, particularly with regards to developing and implementing effective protection programs for human rights defenders.

With regards to U.S. policy toward Colombia, WOLA makes the following specific policy recommendations:

1. The U.S. government should speak out forcefully and consistently on human rights concerns in Colombia, maintaining the pressure exerted during the first half of 1997.

2. The U.S. government should also actively encourage the Colombian government to adopt the NGO proposals for protecting human rights advocates, should speak out in defense of Colombian human rights activists under threat, and should include a specific section on the situation of human rights monitors in Colombia in the State Department's annual human rights report.

3. No U.S. assistance should be provided to the Colombian army or units of other branches of the armed forces or police implicated in human rights abuses until the above recommendations have been adopted and adequate sanctions have begun to be imposed on members of the security forces — military and police — responsible for committing human rights violations.

4. The Clinton administration should not approve further sales of helicopters or lethal equipment to the Colombian army, currently provided for counternarcotics purposes, until the above conditions are met.

5. The U.S. government should provide political and financial assistance to the Human Rights Unit of the Fiscalía and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

6. The U.S. State Department should provide the U.S. Congress and Colombian and U.S. NGOs timely information on which units of the Colombian armed forces are receiving U.S. assistance, should share the results of end-use monitoring efforts, and should allow the GAO to comply with its congressional functions without interference.

7. The Clinton administration should continue to apply the "spirit" of the Leahy amendment to all forms of U.S. antinarcotics-related security assistance and to counternarcotics assistance provided through the Department of Defense.

8. The provisions laid out in the Leahy amendment should be expanded to include all forms of military and police assistance and should be adopted into permanent law. □

## RESOURCES

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### Colombia Human Rights Contacts

If you would like to become more active with Colombia human rights issues, there may be a support group near you. Please inform us of any address changes, or of additional groups to include on this list. If there is no group near you, try your local human rights, peace and justice, or Latin America solidarity group.

#### *Australia*

LAIC  
PO Box 4248  
Melbourne University  
Parkville, Victoria 3052  
Australia  
phone 9470 5300  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/www/latinamerican/laics/laic.html>

#### *Austria*

Casa Cultural Colombiana/Haus der kolumbianischen Kultur  
Margaretenquertel 122-124  
A-1050 Wien, Austria

#### *Belgium*

Coordinación Belga Por Colombia  
Lange Lozanastraat 14  
B-2018 Antwerp Belgium  
32 3 237 5630  
fax 32 3 248 6682  
sago@gn.apc.org

NCOS  
Vlasfabriekstraat 11  
B-1060 Brussels, Belgium  
32 2 539 2620  
fax 32 2 539 1343  
ncosdocent@gn.apc.org

#### *Canada*

Canadian Colombian Association  
P.O. BOX 591  
Station "A"  
Toronto, ON M5V 1E4  
Telefax: (416)503 8368  
yu154024@yorku.ca

Colombia Human Rights Coalition  
3981 Ave. Barclay Apt. 5  
Montreal, QUE H35 1K9  
514 737-4682  
Fax 514 737-7817

ICCHRLA  
129 St. Clair Ave. W. #201  
Toronto ONT  
Canada M4V 1N5  
416 921-0801  
fax 416 921-3843  
icchrla@web.net

#### *England*

Colombia Committee for Human Rights  
PO Box 12290  
London SW9 0ZQ England  
44 171 582 9420

Colombia Refugee Association  
Unit 7, Holles House  
Overton Road  
London SW9 7JN England  
44 171 924 0647  
fax 44 171 274-7142

Peace Brigades International  
Colombia Project  
1b Waterlow Road  
London, N19 5NJ, U.K.  
Tel 44 171 272 4448  
Fax 44 171 272 9243  
pbicolombia@gn.apc.org  
<http://www.igc.org/pbi/colombia.html>

#### *Germany*

Kolumbiengruppe e.V.  
Postfach 1347  
D-72603 Nuertingen, Germany  
Tel/Fax: 0049-7022-36242

#### *Netherlands*

Colombia Komitee Nederland  
Nieuwe Herengracht 29/1  
NL-1011 AL Amsterdam  
Netherlands  
31 20 626-6717 Tues

Pax Christi Nederland  
Postbus 19318  
NL 3501 DH Utrecht  
Netherlands  
31 30 333346  
fax 31 30 368199  
paxchristi@antenna.nl

#### *Switzerland*

Jakob Th. Moller  
Centre for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneve 10  
Switzerland  
Fax 022 9 1700123

#### *United States*

Colombia Committee  
P.O. Box 47433  
Seattle, WA 98146

Colombia Human Rights Committee  
2335 Altgeld  
Chicago, IL 60647  
312 489-6279

Colombia Human Rights Committee  
P.O. Box 9355  
Coral Springs, FL 33065

Colombia Human Rights Committee  
P.O. Box 3130  
Washington, DC 20010  
202 232-8148 fax 202 462-4724  
colhrc@igc.apc.org

Colombia Human Rights Info. Com.  
P.O. Box 40155  
San Francisco, CA 94140

Colombia Media Committee  
P.O. Box 1091 GPO  
New York, NY 10116  
212 802-7209  
mmcompa@igc.apc.org

**Colombia Support Network - CSN**  
(Headquarters & Madison chapter)  
P.O. Box 1505  
Madison, WI 53701  
608 257-8753 fax 608 255-6621  
csn@igc.apc.org  
<http://www.igc.apc.org/csn/>

CSN - Champaign-Urbana (Solidarity for Human Rights in Colombia)  
604 W. Nevada, Apt. 6  
Urbana, Illinois 61801  
217 384-0666  
santafe@ux6.cso.uiuc.edu

CSN - Univ of Oregon c/o Furuya  
3458 Centennial #92  
Eugene, OR 97401  
541 345-7473  
smgfuruya@aol.com

Colombia Vive (CSN - Boston)  
59 Fenno St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
617 868-7770 fax 508 369-8609  
crumbleyc@woods.uml.edu

PBI/United States  
2642 College Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94704  
510 540-0749, fax 510 849-1247  
pbiousa@igc.apc.org

**CSN  
Urgent Action  
Service**

In partnership between the St. Louis Human Rights Action Service (SLHRAS) and the Colombia Support Network, an Urgent Action Service was established in September, to provide busy people with a way to respond to human rights abuses in Colombia.

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# Mapiripán

*The Paramilitary and the Media in Southern Region of Colombia*

*By Luis C. Arenas*

Between the 15th and the 20th of July of 1997, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - AUC - (United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia) made their macabre appearance in a remote and forgotten town in the Department of Meta called Mapiripán. The AUC cut the throats of 30 peasants whom they accused of “aiding the guerrillas” known as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). The massacre led to the immediate flight of at least 500 of the town’s 2000 inhabitants, mostly to Villavicencio, capital of the Department.

Little is known of the victims. A journalist from *El Tiempo* who travelled to Mapiripán to cover the massacre, described briefly three of the victims.<sup>1</sup> According to her, Sinai Blanco, owner of a number of motor boats and a gas station, had been assigned by the guerrillas the task of “collecting a toll from the cars that used the road linking Mapiripán with Villavicencio.” José Valencia, airport manager, was reported to have “spoken poorly of the authorities” at a meeting called by the guerrillas some months previously. Antonio Barrera, owner of a small hotel and a discotheque, was well-known as a communist militant, due to his habit of addressing everyone as “comrade”.

Only in early November, were some of the more independent news media in Colombia, such as the magazine *Cambio 16-Colombia*, beginning to piece together details of the events which occurred in Mapiripán, and the complicity of the Army and the Police.<sup>2</sup> The accusation is based on the testimony of at least four people who had the courage and the means to alert the Army and the Anti-Narcotics Police to the arrival of the murderers in the

village of Mapiripán. Despite receiving the information, neither the Army nor the Police did anything to prevent the massacre.

Among the witnesses’ reports, the declarations of Leonardo Ivan Cortes, Mapiripán’s only judge, stands out. Although the paramilitaries took the keys to the courthouse from him so that no-one could use the telephone or the Fax machine, he got hold of a spare set of keys, and from the day that the murders began he got the information out to his superior, Judge Fausto Ruben Diaz, president of the Superior Tribunal of Villavicencio, to the Red Cross, and to the Joaquin Paris Battalion of the Army, stationed in San José del Guaviare.

Judge Cortes claims that for five days, morning and night, he made calls for help to the Army, but that Major Hernan Orozco, the acting commander of the battalion, told him that he was sorry but he could not help, because the battalion’s helicopters were busy on a counter-guerrilla operation in Caqueta and that he would have to wait for logistical support before going to Mapiripán.

Faced with this situation alone, the judge pleaded with the assassins to spare the lives of the victims, and succeeded in having three of them released. This gave him the courage to make a written record of what was taking place each day, which he faxed to his superiors. “I wanted to leave a written record in case they killed me. I didn’t want this crime to go unpunished,” declared Judge Cortes to *Cambio 16-Colombia*. Reading his account one can share his feeling of impotence at the terror which the paramilitary brought to Mapiripán: “Each night they kill groups of five or six people, who are cruelly and monstrously massacred after first being tortured. One hears the cries of ordinary people, begging for mercy and crying out for help.” In another part he tells how “they threw

1. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, August 30th 1997, Page 13A, “Córdoba y Urabá exportan paramilitares” (“Córdoba and Urabá are exporting paramilitary”), by Bibiana Mercado.

2. *Ibid.*

*Luis Carlos Arenas is a Colombian attorney who worked with the Institute for Legal Service Alternatives in Bogotá.*

the bodies into the river, and if the river washed them up, they threw them in again, further towards the middle, as if they were many dogs.”<sup>3</sup>

The judge recounts how on July 20th his neighbors warned him that the paramilitary knew that he was sending out the news of the massacre, and that he should leave Mapiripán. He went to the airstrip and begged the pilot of the only plane which travels to Mapiripán to take him, because he was going to be killed. Today he is in hiding and fearing for his life, because the paramilitary have got hold of his telephone number and call him every day with threats.

The Red Cross was the first to arrive in Mapiripán on July 20th, and spread the news of the massacre. The



military commander of the zone, General Jaime Humberto Uzcátegui, Commander of the VII Brigade, based in Villavicencio, told *Cambio 16-Colombia* that “he only learned of the massacre on July 20th, from the telephone call of

a journalist.” When asked about the calls for help from the judge, he replied that “to move troops you need more than one source of information, not the word of just one man.”<sup>4</sup>

But the authorities also ignored the report of the pilot of the airline which flies to Mapiripán, who on July 17th told the Anti-Narcotics Police that on July 15th armed men had forcibly removed two of his passengers from the plane when he was about to leave Mapiripán.

When asked by the *Cambio 16-Colombia* reporter for his reaction to the massacre in Mapiripán, Colonel Leonardo Gallegos, national director of the Anti-Narcotics Police (and the Colombian official most praised by the government of the United States, after General Rosso José Serrano), replied that he only got back from operations in Caquetá on July 21st. “He added that it was only then that he checked his mail and found the report of the pilot’s declaration. ‘I immediately passed it on to the heads of the institution and contacted the (Police) commander in Guaviare.’”<sup>5</sup>

3. *Cambio 16-Colombia*, November 3, 1997.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

Colonel Fernando Saavedra, the Chief of Police in the Department of Guaviare and the senior officer for the zone, states that he received instructions from the Anti-Narcotics Police to begin an investigation into the events of Mapiripán on July 26, 11 days after the massacre, and five days after the news media had reported it. However, according to him, there was no massacre in Mapiripán: “When I went there, there weren’t even three people dead. There was a paramilitary incursion, but the [missing] people had disappeared because they were afraid.” And he adds: “Nobody found anything there not even a leg. The Red Cross told everyone to exaggerate the problem to give it repercussions. The Red Cross has a lot to do with this... To justify their presence ... Because... where are the bodies?”<sup>6</sup>

So far, the State Attorney’s Office (Procuraduría General de la Nación) has announced that it will begin an investigation into the conduct of General Jaime Humberto Uzcátegui, Major Hernán Orozco Castro, Major Horacio Galeano and Captain Luis Carlos López, for not responding to the calls for help from the village of Mapiripán. The Office has also decided to begin investigations into the conduct of the Mayor, the Recorder (Registrador), the Inspector, the Town Clerk (Secretario de Gobierno) and the Citizens’ Defense (Personero) for not having reported the events.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, judging by the accusations cited in *Cambio 16-Colombia*, many others were complicit in the massacre.

The recent massacre of Mapiripán is not the only incident in the region, nor is it without a long history. The southern part of Meta, where Mapiripán is situated, together with parts of the departments of Caquetá, Guaviare and Putumayo, is the heartland of the FARC. For several decades, this guerrilla group has had absolute control over these parts of the country, which was undisputed by the state until recently. In the last fifteen years the political violence in the Southern region of the country has increased, especially in the department of Meta. The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) reported that “from 1985 to 1995, 554 people in Meta were killed for political reasons and 149 people was forc-

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. WOLA. “Losing Ground: Human Rights Advocates Under Attack in Colombia.” October 1997. For more information on Meta, see *Justicia y Paz. A Magazine of Human Rights for Colombia*. “Violence in Meta: ‘A Question of Intolerance’.” by Eugenio Guerrero. Fall 1996. Vol.1 # 1.

ibly disappeared, the majority by paramilitary groups (60 and 66 percent, respectively). Of those killed, 206 were members of the UP (Union Patriótica), as were 41 of these disappeared.”<sup>8</sup> Putumayo was where the guerrillas inflicted the worst defeat on the Colombian Army in almost 40 years of internal armed conflict in Colombia, when they attacked the army base at “Las Delicias” in the middle 1996 year, killing 30 soldiers and taking another 60 prisoner. This episode culminated 9 months later in negotiations between the government and the guerrillas, after the failure of the army’s attempt to find them. The terms agreed on for the release of the soldiers included the withdrawal of the army from 13,000 square kilometers of the zone.

The guerrilla attack at Las Delicias and the army’s subsequent failure to locate those responsible, alerted decision-makers in both Colombia and the United States to the limited capacity of the Colombian Army in the southern region of the country.<sup>9</sup> It is thus no coincidence that the paramilitary should want to take over the southern region of the country, given their relative success in regions like Córdoba and Urabá, or the Magdalena Medio (Middle Magdalena), with the active encouragement and cooperation of the Colombian armed forces. For this purpose, however, it was necessary to considerably increase their military capability. Apparently this has been taking place since the beginning of the year, through the acquisition of helicopters and heavy armament from the Russians, financed by the drug cartels, as was reported in the *Washington Post*.<sup>10</sup>

The authority of the FARC in southern Colombia rests on a mix of coercion and consensus. Coercion through the force of arms, and consensus built up through the long years of accompanying the peasant settlers in these remote parts of the country, and, when the occasion demanded, defending their interests. This diverse society

9. An editorial in the *Washington Post* entitled “The Colombian Question” said “In Washington, the Colombian question is more than a little political. The Republican right suggests funnelling more aid to the army and helping some paramilitaries.” October 11, 1997, Page A-26.

10. *The Washington Post*, Washington DC, September 29, 1997. “Russian Mob, Drugs Cartels Joining Forces,” by Douglas Farah. No attempt has been made by journalists in Colombia to verify the facts behind this serious accusation, given the channels of communication which apparently exist between Castaño’s group and a number of news media. The weekly *Semana* limited itself to presenting the same information as the *Post*, merely adding a ciné noir tone to the article. See *Semana*, Bogotá, October 6th, 1997, page 42, “La cocavodka” (“Cocavodka”).

has been formed over the last forty years by peasants fleeing La Violencia, the armed confrontation of the two traditional parties which shook Colombia in the 40’s and 50’s; by peasants frustrated by the failed agrarian reform of the 1970s; and by landless peasants attracted by the coca bonanza in the 80’s.

Some of the news media did not hide their satisfaction that, with the massacre of Mapiripán, the dominion of the FARC over the southern region of the country had begun to weaken. The weekly Colombian magazine *Semana*, for example, began its account of the massacre celebrating the fact that in a message intercepted by the security organization, the military commander of the FARC seemed shaken by the massacre: “The voice of Jorge Briceño Suárez, alias ‘Mono Jojoy’, for the first time sounded nervous. It was no longer the confident, arrogant tone of before. On the contrary, the military head of the FARC sounded anxious.”<sup>11</sup> An anxiety which did not seem to be shared by the editors of the principal Colombian news weekly, at the prospect of a new spiral of violence.

The massacre of Mapiripán was not an isolated incident and two weeks afterwards, the news of fighting in Meta was becoming more and more alarming. On August 8th, an armed group of the FARC had attacked a paramilitary base in the northeast portion of the department, in

the town of Puerto Gaitán, an area recognized as being under the sway of the paramilitary. According to *Semana*, quoting a military source, the combat “lasted for five days and left 12 paramilitary combatants



and 17 guerrillas dead.” The magazine went on: “Although the authorities have not reported the number of wounded, unofficial estimates calculate approximately fifty on each side. A spokesperson for the International Red Cross who returned from the scene of the fighting said that some of the dead were wearing camouflage uniforms, and added that although it was not possible to be sure, ‘it seems that the majority of the victims were armed combatants and that the civilian population was not affected.’”<sup>12</sup>

11. *Semana*, “Guerra Total” (“Total War”), Bogotá, July 28th, 1997, page 40.

12. *Semana*, “Ojo por ojo” (“An eye for an eye”), Bogotá, August 18th, 1997, page 40.

The two violent episodes already mentioned, the massacre of Mapiripán and the battle between guerrillas and the paramilitary in Puerto Gaitán, were used by the most influential Colombian news media as evidence of the successful formation of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia). The AUC had apparently developed the political and military strength necessary to stem the pessimism overtaking



many of the political and economic élites in Colombia, especially those associated with finance capital, at the likely outcome of the armed conflict in the country. This pessimism had recently been showing itself in a tendency to look for quick

political solutions. It was believed that with the creation of the AUC and with their violent actions against the civilian population in Meta, the perception that the guerrillas were winning the war which was created by the same mass media, would change. Thus, the interpretation that *Semana* places on the violent actions of the paramilitary has them “giving the guerrillas a taste of their own medicine, and sending a message to the government that any negotiation with the guerrillas had to involve them also. In other words, the self-defense groups want to participate in the negotiations on equal footing with the guerrillas.”<sup>13</sup>

The two conclusions, however, besides their insensitivity at the worsening of the conflict, were only half true. On the one hand, despite the extremely serious human rights violations committed by the Colombian guerrillas, they have never reached the same depths of barbarity as the paramilitary. The second conclusion was at the very least cynical, given that as *Semana* itself revealed,<sup>14</sup> on July 20th two members of the government’s peace commission, José Noé Ríos and Daniel García-Peña, met with the supreme leader of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, in order to discuss the role of the paramilitary groups in an eventual peace process, at the very moment in which Castaño’s paramilitary was committing the massacre of Mapiripán.

13. Ibid.

14. *Semana*, “El chorro de babas” (“Just Bla bla bla”), by María Isabel Rueda, Bogotá, September 15th, 1997, page 34.

15. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, September 28th, 1997, page 8A, “Va a haber muchos más Mapiripánes” (“There are going to be many more Mapiripánes”), by Bibiana Mercado and Orlando León Restrepo.

In what seemed like an attempt to contribute to the creation of a new image for the paramilitary groups, *El Tiempo*, the most influential of Colombia’s newspapers, published an interview with Carlos Castaño, the driving force and the brains intellect the AUC. *El Tiempo* gave the interview considerable prominence. The first installment was headlined with a threatening phrase of Castaño’s: “There will be many more Mapiripánes,” and described how Mapiripán had been “the biggest battle the paramilitary has fought in their history. We had never before killed 49 members of the FARC nor captured 47 rifles. Our losses were 12. The fighting lasted for 6 days.”<sup>15</sup> In the interview, Castaño highlights the military power of the AUC, details of the organization and its financing in the different regions of the country. The second installment had a more conciliatory headline: “The left is not a military target.”<sup>16</sup> In this interview, Castaño speaks of the conditions he requires for the demobilization of the AUC, his position regarding a possible peace process, and the distinctions he draws between the left and guerrillas. This last is nothing new; it is another instance of the pressure exerted on the leaders and intellectuals of the different left groups to distance themselves from the armed struggle, and also not to feel threatened by the paramilitary.

However, all of the efforts of the media to support the actions of the AUC and to clean up the image of Carlos Castaño were undone when another massacre took place in the department of Meta. This time the victims were the members of a judicial commission in the region investigating the expropriation of property of the area’s suspected drug traffickers. The events took place October 4th at a place known as San Carlos de Garagoa. The paramilitary action, led by “Luciano”, the paramilitary chief in the Llanos Orientales (the eastern plains region, of which Meta is a part), left 11 dead and 17 wounded among the 40 members of the commission. Common practice in Colombia, the military authorities initially attributed the action to the FARC. This was lent credence by the violent action of the FARC the next day, when they ambushed a police convoy in San Juan de Arama, also in the department of Meta. The FARC violated international human rights conventions by finishing off the wounded during this action, which killed a total of 17 counterinsurgency police.

16. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, September 29th, 1997, page 3A, “La izquierda no es objetivo militar” (“The left is not a military target”), by Bibiana Mercado and Orlando León Restrepo.

The FARC was still being held responsible for the massacre of the judicial commission, however rumours were spreading that it had in fact been the AUC. At this time, Carlos Castaño sent a communiqué to the news media in the name of the AUC, in which he stated “if the participation of some of our allies in the massacre can be proven, we will insist that their leader place himself at the disposal of the courts, together with his men.” As the victims were members of a judicial commission taking action against the property of drug traffickers in the region, the communiqué of the AUC went on: “When the AUC were created, it was agreed that there should be no involvement with the drug trade. This was the central point. It was also agreed that each leader would be responsible for his zone and that the State and all of its institutions would be respected.”<sup>17</sup> In response to the AUC’s message, the office of the President of the Republic released a statement on the same day, substantiating the accusations against the AUC: “The state prosecutor’s office has testimony and evidence which indicate that paramilitary or self-defense groups participated in the murder of members of a commission of the CTI (Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación de la Fiscalía, Technical Investigations Group of the State Prosecutor’s Office) and of the DAS (Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, Department of Security Administration) who, in the company of members of the army, were carrying out their duties in Meta.”<sup>18</sup>

On October 10th, the daily newspaper *El Tiempo* ran a report of an extraordinary top-level meeting of the paramilitary heads of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, Ramón Izasa and Clodomiro Agame.<sup>19</sup> According to the newspaper, at the meeting “Luciano’s” responsibility of the massacre was confirmed, “as he has been the paramilitary head of the region for 8 years.” The article went on to describe the possibility of dissolving the AUC, because, according to Carlos Castaño, “it is easier to dissolve the self-defense groups than to purge them,” i.e. to break the evident links between the paramilitary and the drug trade in the Llanos Orientales. However, the conclusion of the meeting was to call on Luciano to account for his actions, and “if he doesn’t appear, the Autodefensas Unidas de

Colombia will dissolve themselves immediately, and each group will go its own separate way.”<sup>20</sup> The report on the meeting goes on to say that Carlos Castaño offered to bring Luciano by helicopter (one of those bought from the Russians?) to his base in the department of Córdoba, so that he could explain the massacre.”<sup>21</sup> According to *Semana*, in a communiqué Luciano “described Castaño’s demands as ‘irrational’ and announced that from now on he would no longer obey orders from the leaders of the self-defense groups in the Llanos nor of those in Córdoba or Urabá.”<sup>22</sup>

As soon as the involvement of the paramilitary in the massacre of the judicial commission became known, their apologists in the media beat a hasty retreat. The weekly *Semana*, for example, editorialized “the involvement of the self-defense group in a massacre of legal functionaries gives the lie to the efforts of Castaño’s followers to undo the links between that organization and the drug cartels.” It went on “Since 1989, when the paramilitary groups carried out the worst massacres in the recent history of the country, including one of another judicial commission, Castaño and the paramilitary came up with a strategy to give themselves legitimacy by giving their movement a political character. For that reason Castaño created the Self-Defense group of Córdoba and Urabá - ACCU - so that it could act as the sole interlocutor of the government. The strategy seemed to work, because the self-defense groups devoted themselves to attacking the guerrillas politically and militarily. They bolstered their political discourse with the announcement that they would demobilize as soon as the guerrillas laid down their arms. On the military front, the ACCU won clear victories over the insurgents, such as their assault on the stronghold of the FARC in Mapiripán.”<sup>23</sup>

It is not very surprising that, in spite of everything, there are some who continue to regard the massacre of Mapiripán as an “assault” on a “stronghold of the FARC,” when this action, so applauded by some sections of the media, was the savage hunting down of 30 unarmed peasants guilty of nothing more than having lived in an area of political influence of the FARC, and marked the beginning of paramilitary atrocities in the southern portion of the country.

There seems little likelihood that the massacres in the region have come to an end. □

17. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, October 6th, 1997.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, October 10th, 1997.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Semana*, “Challenge to Castaño”, Bogotá, October 19th, 1997.

23. *Ibid.*

# The Washington Update: A Hell of a Ride

*The U.S. Congress passed a new Leahy Amendment requiring that military aid to Colombia be monitored, but despite rhetoric on the protection of human rights, the Clinton Administration continues to seek increases in such aid.*

*By Carlos Salinas*

**O**n November 26, 1997, President Clinton signed into law fiscal year 1998's foreign aid spending bill or the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act (H.R. 2159), bringing to a close an important chapter in grassroots campaigning on Colombia in the U.S. and opening a new area of work. At the same time, 1997 saw an unprecedented increase in military aid to Colombia and Blackhawk helicopters were approved for the Colombian National Police.

Concerned individuals, members of networks and non-governmental organizations rallied behind the Leahy Amendment, a Congressional measure prohibiting US counterdrug aid from foreign military units implicated in human rights violations. Named for its chief sponsor, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), it was supported by other human rights champions such as Representatives Esteban Torres (D-CA) and Nancy Pelosi (D-CA).

## *Expanding the Leahy Amendment*

The Leahy Amendment was first passed as part of the Fiscal Year 1997 Foreign Operations Appropriations but only applied to counterdrug aid controlled by the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, i.e. it only applied to a specific counterdrug account — not even all counterdrug aid. A month after its passage, Amnesty International USA showed that the US government had been providing military aid to Colombian military units implicated in gross human rights violations, despite Administration assurances to the contrary. This revelation made the need for the Leahy Amendment very clear.

Early in 1997, the Clinton Administration voluntar-

ily applied the criteria established by the Leahy Amendment (no aid to units credibly alleged to be implicated in rights violations) to all forms of counterdrug aid. At the same time, the Administration appears to have been pressing the Colombian Government to sign an end-use monitoring agreement, a mechanism by which the US would be able to ensure that its assistance was being used for the intended purpose, i.e. for counterdrug operations. When the Colombian Army balked, US aid that had been approved was halted.

## *Attack on Leahy: The Hearings*

This raised the wrath of certain lawmakers who had been eager to have aid flow to Colombia. Representatives Dan Burton (R-IN), J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL), Bob Barr (R-GA), and Benjamin Gilman (R-NY) ridiculed the extension of the Leahy Amendment by the Administration during a 9 July hearing of the Government Reform and Oversight Committee's Subcommittee on National Security. Representative Burton is the chair of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight while Rep. Hastert is the chair of the Subcommittee on National Security. Rep. Hastert has held a series of hearings on Colombia and counterdrug programs yet he has not invited non-governmental human rights witnesses to testify while on a number of occasions, members of the Colombian armed forces have presented testimony, with no one challenging them.

At that hearing, US Ambassador to Colombia Myles

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*Carlos Salinas is the Government Program Officer for Latin America for Amnesty International*

Frechette said he had tried to get the Colombian Defense Ministry to sign an agreement in which they acknowledge these conditions but was unsuccessful because of the Colombian Army's opposition. These Representatives ridiculed Ambassador Frechette, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs Jeffrey Davidow, and Acting Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Jane Becker. These members of the Administration were very eloquent about the need to en-

sure human rights safeguards on aid to Colombia and the intransigence of the Colombian Army (which at that time was led by current Colombian chief of staff, General Bonnet).

Despite considerable Congressional pressure, the Administration held firm and refused to release aid until some type of guarantee was instated. At around this time, the head of Colombia's armed forces, General Bedoya, was fired by President Samper, and on August 1, an end-

use monitoring agreement was signed between Colombia and the USA.

### ***Attack on Leahy: The “Rule”***

These same Representatives decided to delete the Leahy Amendment from the House version of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill which they did via the “rule”. In the House of Representatives, a rule is a resolution which governs the handling of a bill on the floor, in this case, the “Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 1998,” H.R. 2159, a.k.a. the Foreign Ops Bill.

The Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2159) or Rule reads (page 2, lines 11-15): Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 or 6 of rule XXI are waived except as follows: beginning with “: Provided” on page 24, line 8, through “justice” on line 16. This referred to the Leahy Amendment which read (page 24, lines 8-16 of the Foreign Ops Bill):

*Provided further; That none of the funds made available under this heading [Department of State, International Narcotics Control] may be provided to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible evidence to believe such unit has committed gross violations of human rights unless the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that the government of such country is taking steps to bring the responsible members of the security forces unit to justice.*

This rule enabled a point of order against the Leahy Amendment (and only the Leahy Amendment), which would thus result in the removal of the Amendment. A point of order is an objection raised by a member that the chamber is breaking its own rules. The objector cites the rule, and the chair sustains the objection if it is correct. In this case, the point of order would be certain to delete the Leahy Amendment from the House Foreign Ops bill.

The reason this could happen is that the Leahy Amendment is “authorizing” and not “appropriating” language. The “authorization” language is supposed to be language which specifies the programs to be funded: which ones and in what way, and includes restrictions such as those of the Leahy Amendment. “Appropriations” on the other hand is only supposed to designate amounts

of money to be spent on the “authorized” programs. But this has not been the case as there has not been an authorizing bill for foreign aid in several years. Instead, all of this has been included in the appropriations.

Since the Foreign Ops Bill has been replete with such language in the past few years, it has been common practice for the rule against such language to be waived by precluding such points of order from being raised when the bill is considered. In this case, the waiver on such points of order was applied to the entire bill except for the Leahy Amendment. Any member could raise the point of order to strike it from the bill.

The moment of truth came on the evening of Wednesday, 30 July 1997. At the outset of the proceedings, Rep. Esteban Torres (D-CA) made an eloquent introductory speech in which he defended the Leahy Amendment. Rep. Bob Barr called the point of order but House Members rose in opposition to the point. Rep. Torres spoke first against removing this provision, and was followed by Reps. Thomas Barrett (D-WI), Sam Farr (D-CA), and Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). No one spoke in favor of removing it, not the Member who actually executed the removal, Rep. Barr, or the member believed to be directly responsible for engineering the maneuver, the Chairman of the International Relations Committee, Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman.

### ***Heading into Conference***

But all was not lost. As with all bills, there were two versions of the Foreign Ops Bill: one version in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate. The Senate’s version had already passed the Senate and included an “expanded” version of the Leahy Amendment. It extended the human rights restriction to all forms of military aid — not just some forms of counternarcotics aid as in the original version. This expanded Leahy Amendment, in the Senate’s Foreign Ops Bill, was as follows:

*Sec. 569. None of the funds made available by this Act [Foreign Ops Approp. bill] may be provided to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible evidence to believe such unit has committed gross violations of human rights, unless the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that the government of such country is taking steps*

*to bring the responsible members of the security forces units to justice.*

The two versions were to be turned into one version by a process called "conference" by September 30, the end of the fiscal year, so it could be sent to President Clinton to be enacted as law. In conference, the members of the subcommittees on Foreign Ops from House and Senate get together to resolve the differences between the two versions. This process ended up being delayed significantly because of unrelated controversies.

September also saw the confirmation hearing in the Senate for the incoming U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Curtis W. Kamman. During the hearing on September 10 before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, Amb. Kamman was asked by Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) how he had implemented the Leahy Amendment in Bolivia, where he was currently the Ambassador. Amb. Kamman stated that the US Embassy found one case, dating from 1994, that appeared to fit the Leahy criteria. Clearly, there will be more follow-up. Amb. Kamman did meet with a small group of human rights NGOs on December 19 and answered questions relating to his tenure in Bolivia and asked questions about Colombia.

### ***Victory!***

In the meantime, grass roots organizations focused on the members of the Foreign Ops subcommittee but also on another key member, Rep. Gilman. Chairman Gilman has traditionally been a strong supporter of human rights so his opposition to the Leahy Amendment was very troubling. After much discussion and many calls from constituents, Chairman Gilman wrote Amnesty members in his home district that he could support the Leahy Amendment. This of course signaled the compromise, opening the way for the approval of the Leahy Amendment in the final reconciled version of the For-

eign Ops bill.

The final, approved version, which was signed into law on November 26, is for fiscal year 1998, and applies to all military aid provided under the spending bill, not just counternarcotics aid. Since the Leahy Amendment is part of the Foreign Ops Bill, it needs to be renewed each year. This new Leahy Amendment, the new law of the land, is as follows:

#### *Limitation On Assistance to Security Forces*

*Sec.. 570. None of the funds made available by this Act may be provided to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible evidence that such unit has committed gross violations of human rights, unless the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that the government of such country is taking effective measures to bring the responsible members of the security forces unit to justice: Provided, That nothing in this section shall be construed to withhold funds made available by this Act from any unit of the security forces of a foreign country not credibly alleged to be involved in gross violations of human rights: Provided further, That in the event that funds are withheld from any unit pursuant to this section, the Secretary of*

*State shall promptly inform the foreign government of the basis for such action and shall, to the maximum extent practicable, assist the foreign government in taking effective measures to bring the responsible members of the security forces to justice so funds to that unit may be resumed.*

### ***Yet Another Increase in Aid***

Paradoxically, while having extended end-use safeguards, the Administration had also expanded aid to Colombia, approving more than \$115 million for the fiscal

year that ended on October 1, 1997. This aid has a sizable military component, as it is composed of two defense drawdowns (\$40.5 million in September 1996 and \$14.2 million in September 1997), a "614" waiver of military aid (\$30.6 million in August 1997), and aid appropriated to the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau of the State Department for fiscal year 1997 (approx. \$30 million). Not all the details are in about FY98 aid although we know that the Administration had requested \$53,900,000.00 in aid. This amount did not include Excess Defense Articles or Commercial Sales. One detail we do know is that the Souder Amendment passed.

### ***The Souder Amendment: Blackhawks***

On 30 July 1997, during the Foreign Ops proceedings in the House, Rep. Hastert introduced on behalf of Rep. Souder (R-IN) a proposal totaling \$50 million which would provide four Blackhawk helicopters to the Colombian National Police. This proposal is known as the Souder Amendment and was as follows:

*Amendment No. 75: Page 24, line 16, insert before the period the following: " : Provided further, That not less than \$50,000,000 shall be available only for the procurement in the United States of four UH-60 Blackhawk utility helicopters, including maintenance and support for such helicopter, to be made available to the DANTI anti-narcotics unit of the Colombian National Police for the purpose of carrying out counternarcotics activities".*

During the July 30 proceedings, Rep. Hastert obtained the commitment from the House leadership to ensure this amendment would survive "conference," the process of turning the House and Senate versions of the Foreign Ops bill into one.

On September 18, members of the House held a press conference supporting this Amendment. Joining Reps. Gilman, Barr, Burton, Souder, and Hastert were Rep. Peter King (R-NY) and the heads of the Colombian National Police and the Counterdrug unit of the CNP, the DANTI (Dirección Antinarcóticos). Rep. Souder declared that he was doing this for the "children of Fort Wayne." All present heaped lavish praise on the Colombian security forces; no one mentioned the continuing human rights crisis.

During Foreign Ops "conference," the Souder amendment, which was not in the Senate version of the Foreign Ops bill, was included in a somewhat modified form. The result was an agreement for \$15,000,000 in a new account, "Narcotics Interdiction", in order to pro-

vide the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) with the flexibility and funds to procure Black Hawk helicopters for the Colombian National Police. The bureau is directed to use the funds in this account, together with base funds from "International Narcotics Control", to procure three Black Hawk utility helicopters, including maintenance and training, for the National Police solely for counternarcotics purposes, at a cost of \$36,000,000. In addition \$14,000,000 should be made available to provide upgrades for UH-1H Huey helicopters for the Colombian National Police solely for counternarcotics purposes.

Regardless of this and other aid, it still has to conform to the criteria set forth by the Leahy Amendment. The challenge for us is to ensure full implementation of the bill. And to make sure that Washington policy- and lawmakers understand that we will not stand idly while the US transfers aid to the continuing carnage in Colombia.

### ***What you can do:***

\* Clearly, the Souder amendment will transfer of Blackhawks to the Colombian National Police. Given the human rights crisis in Colombia, this and other US transfers need to be monitored closely to ensure they are not used to commit human rights violations. Since Rep. Souder is responsible for the Blackhawks, he should take responsibility for what these helicopters do, by leading in monitoring efforts and being able to pinpoint where they are, how they are being used, and to ensure human rights violations in the regions where they are used are not attributed to those helicopters. Rep. Mark Souder's phone is (202) 225-4436 and his fax is (202) 225-3479.

\* Rep. Hastert will probably have another round of hearings in 1998 during which he is bound to attack the Leahy Amendment while continuing to push for increased aid to Colombia. As chairman of the National Security Subcommittee of the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, he should be encouraged to call to testify non-governmental human rights NGOs. He should also be encouraged to support the Leahy Amendment. Rep. J. Dennis Hastert's phone is (202) 225-2976 and his fax is (202) 225-0697.

\* Keep track of such developments. You may want to start by familiarizing yourself with a great web page that has the Congressional proceedings and bills. Go to <http://thomas.loc.gov>. You can read the proceedings for July 30 in the Congressional Record for the House and see the parts when the Leahy Amendment was stripped and when the Souder Amendment was introduced.

\* And stay tuned!



# The U'wa: Struggling For the Right Not to Be Sold

## Part I

*By Javier Giraldo, S. J.*

“Casa Roja has a spirit. It’s the spirit of unity.” So said Berito, Grand Cacique of the U’wa. He spoke with the air of an old prophet while explaining to me the essence of his fight, and while surrounded by his own people in that group of rustic buildings, commonly known as “Red House,” where the U’wa sometimes meet in El Chuscal (Cubará, Boyacá).

It was a beautiful experience to be present with the U’wa at that gathering at the Red House at the end of August. It was an encounter with an ethnic group which, despite 500 years of being under siege, has not been destroyed and still retains the spiritual strength to defend what has already become incomprehensible in the minds of the Latin American majority: the right not to be sold.

It was an encounter with a group which proudly retains the attractive and unmistakable physical characteristics of its ethnicity, its language, its traditional authorities, many of its customs and ancestral rites and some of the lands which belonged to its elders, of which it is now being divested by a means that is just as destructive as forced evacuation or genocide, but which appears clothed in the trappings of “progress” and “development.”

That gathering was a beautiful experience of democracy, one which would have been the envy of any of our political, social, or academic institutions. Everyone, man or woman, youth, adult, or elder, has a right to speak, and to have their words listened to and reverently pondered by the others. At the center is the community and its ethnic interests, enlightened by a centuries-old tradition where humanity and nature, God and humanity, the sacred and the profane, economics and culture, individuals and society, all form a sacred unity.

From within our fragmented and compartmentalized culture it is difficult to understand them. However, there is in their struggle, and in the primitive language in which

it is expressed, a petition so profound that it makes us realize how much we have distanced ourselves from what is elementally just and true; how much we’ve disguised injustice and death with sophisticated clothing; how many irrevocable steps we’ve taken on the way to our own destruction.

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The colonists called the U’wa “Tunebos”. The name retains its association with the painful experience of conquest and colonization and all its connotations of oppression of their rights and their identity.

A few years ago they reclaimed their own name. This not only brought the U’wa back to their ancestral tradition but also marked the beginning of the struggle to regain their autonomy and identity; a struggle developed in the eighties, in which they even came to confront missionaries who had dedicated their entire lives to them, though at a time when evangelization did not respect the ancient traditions in the best way nor seek to cross-culturally integrate the Gospel with them. After those years of confrontation, which brought many missionaries to recognize their errors and ask for pardon, today the U’wa live together with a Church that seeks to serve them better and to promote those Christian values which, over the centuries, have been incorporated into their ethnic traditions.

Their ancestral lands covered areas of what are today the departments of Norte de Santander, Santander del Sur, Boyacá, Casanare, and Arauca. They extended from the vicinity of Pamplona west to the middle of the Chicamocha River Valley, including the towns of

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*Father Giraldo is the Executive Secretary of the Bogotá based NGO Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace.*

Chinácota, Málaga, Oiba, Chima, Bucaramanga, Chiscas, and Guicán; to the south the town of Chita, the Chita saltmines and the highland plateau of Pisba; to the east Támara, Tame, Morcote, Fortul, and Saravena, continuing along the foothills to the Sierra de Mérida in Venezuela. Their territory covered approximately 1,400,000 hectares. U'wa territory today covers no more than 200,000 hectares, or some fourteen percent of the ancestral lands. There are twenty-two officially recognized U'wa communities; these are organized into twelve minor councils and one major council. The territories have diverse legal status: they include a Resguardo [similar to a reservation] (comprising Cobaría, Tegría, Bókota and Riconada); a Special Indigenous Reserve (comprising Tauretes and Aguablanca); an Indigenous Territory (lands adjudicated to the natives by INCORA, the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform [in the mid-20th century], and homesteaders on baldíos or public lands [uncultivated lands opened up to homesteading by the government during the 19th and 20th centuries]. In March 1993 the U'wa councils asked INCORA to unify and expand their territory into a Single Resguardo U'wa. Despite the positive recommendation of a socio-economic study on the viability of such a territorial unit, carried out by IDEADE and sponsored by the governors of the different departments involved, the INCORA has still, for reasons unknown, not made a decision.

If the U'wa have appeared in the mass media lately, it is because of their confrontation with the multinational Occidental Oil and Gas Corporation, subsidiary of Occidental Petroleum Corporation, known by its abbreviation OXY, and elements of the Colombian State, which supports the company's interests.

It is said that the U'wa lands are rich in hydrocarbon deposits. Aware of this, the aforementioned multinational negotiated and obtained a license from the Colombian government to explore said territory, looking to exploit the resources of its subsoil. The outcry by the U'wa people, by the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) and by various other human rights organizations, resulted in having the Defensoría del Pueblo [Office of the People's Ombudsman created by the Political Constitution of 1991] take an acción de tutela [injunction] in the name of the U'wa people. This was made possible on the grounds that the community had not been consulted, as is required by Article 330 of the new Constitution and Article 15 of Law 21 of 1991, through which the Conven-

tion 169 on Tribal and Indigenous Peoples adopted by OIT (International Labor Office) in 1989 was incorporated into national law. But despite opinions from both the department of Cundinamarca's Superior Tribunal and the Constitutional Court that consultation had not taken place, thereby making the environmental license granted to OXY by the Ministry of the Environment illegal, the Council of State refused to suspend the license and let it stand in a ruling in March 1997 declaring that the necessary consultation had occurred.

But beyond the legal conflict, the confrontation U'wa v. OXY/State represents certain profound dimensions which call into question some basic pillars of our models of society: "development," and "civilization."

### **Part I. Humanity/Nature: Modernity, Ancestry, and Ecology**

A document released by OXY in May 1997, responding to the need to make known its identity and the values that govern its actions in the context of the conflict with the U'was, states:

*"With approximately 6000 employees, the company carries out business in eleven foreign countries, has exploration projects in 25 foreign countries, and production and exploration operations in the United States and the Gulf of Mexico (...) In the last three decades, it has discovered more than eleven billion barrels of oil and completed development of large projects in record time in physical environments of various types, such as the deserts of Libya and Oman, the North Sea, the forests of Peru and Ecuador, and the foothills of Colombia's eastern plains. (...) At the international level, OXY manages an immense production, equaling more than 500,000 barrels of oil per day, of which the company received 235,000 barrels per day in 1995. OXY has more than fifty million acres under contract in exploration projects (...).*

From his perspective, the Grand Cacique of the U'was states:

*"The people do not want to lose their lives at the hands of the whites or any others. The first caciques who lived in Guicán did everything according to the wishes of the Father in Heaven, and would not give anything over into others' hands. The whites came forcefully, they arrived killing everything. The Father in Heaven gave them that history, and we cannot give things over into the hands of death. The Father had given them his Bless-*

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## Oxy and Shell Threaten U'wa while the Tribe Contemplates Mass Suicide

*"I sing the traditional songs to my children. I teach them that everything is sacred and linked. How can I tell Shell and Oxy that to take the oil is for us worse than killing your own mother? If you kill the Earth, then no one will live." -U'wa woman, August, 1997*

The U'wa people have lived peacefully in the cloud forests of the Colombian Andes for as long as anyone can remember. The last great tragedy to befall these 5,000 people happened 400 years ago, when according to oral histories, a portion of the tribe committed mass ritual suicide rather than submit themselves to Spanish rule. Today, the U'wa are once again talking about death as new invaders -- Occidental Petroleum ("Oxy") and Shell -- move onto their land. As the project moves forward one thing becomes very clear: Whether it is through the pollution of the land they consider sacred, the increased violence that the project will inevitably bring, or by their own hand, oil exploration means the death of the U'wa.

### Oil Project Overview

In April of 1992, Los-Angeles based Occidental Petroleum was granted exploration rights to much of traditional U'wa territory-known to the oil companies as the "Samori block." Shell and Oxy each have a

37.5% investment share in the project, and Ecopetrol, the Colombian national oil company, has 25%. Oxy, the operator of the joint venture, believes the field to hold approximately 1.5 billion barrels of oil, slightly less than three months worth of oil for the United States. Since the beginning, Samore project has been plagued by guerrilla violence and the



steadfast opposition of the U'wa. If it can be brought to production, Oxy and Shell stand to make millions in profits from what could be one of the largest oil fields in this hemisphere.

### Colombia & Oil

Colombia is the fourth-largest and fastest-growing major exporter of oil in South America, increasing its output by nearly 30 percent in 1995, and expecting to double its production by 1998. Under pressure from the United States and interna-

tional financial institutions, the Colombian government has turned to increased oil production as a way to pay off its debts. For the peoples of Colombia living in oil regions though, multinational oil exploitation has brought pollution and conflict.

As Occidental knows, the growing oil infrastructure has served as a magnet for violence. Oxy's Cano Limon pump station and pipeline in Arauca, which controls almost one third of Colombia's oil export has been attacked by guerrillas 473 times in its 11 years of existence. Like in Nigeria and Burma, multinational oil companies are turning to the military to protect their investments. With the strong presence of guerrillas in the area, the Colombian military -- recognized as having one of the worst human rights records in the world and armed with the latest equipment and weapons by the U.S.

government -- has moved in to protect Oxy's and Shell's oil interests. Human rights observers contend and Occidental officials privately concede that oil industry activity in the region will only serve to heighten and focus the violence.

In the last decade, some 1.4 million barrels of crude oil have spilled because of pipeline sabotage in Colombia (the Exxon Valdez spill was only 36,000 barrels). As the Samori block is located in one of the

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ing. *The Little Black Virgin of Guicán kept a warm pool of water for the U'wa to bathe in. Today it is not ours, we have to pay to bathe. There was the salt rock, the Father of Heaven gave it to us, where is it now? Everything has been taken. Everything is finished. Where is the salt? Everything was lost when the Little Black Virgin was lost. The Government owes us a lot. It will never be able to repay us all it owes us. Now they want to go after "Ruirá" (the oil), which lies 3000 meters deep. They want to take it away to other countries. Mother Earth is keeping it there inside. There are many currents below in there; currents of the force of light; without them nothing can be sustained. The traditionalists say: if they carry off this blood of the world, the world will come to an end. OXY wants to take away all that spirit which is in the country. To whom will it give power? (What effects will it have?) To the earthquake. The sun will never rise again. If we don't obey the Law of the Father of Heaven, He says: I have trees, rivers, to punish you. Because without trees there is no life; without seeds there is no life; without tobacco there is no life; without the spirit of coca there is no life. Gold, oil, salt, the Moon... this is strength. And everything gets taken out. (...) There will be no life without water; there will be no life without animals; there will be no life without seeds; there will be no life without salt; there will be no life without all the blessed things. OXY wants to put a syringe into our hearts to drain our blood and take it to the United States: we cannot permit this.*"

Setting aside differences in language used, to which I will return later, there are two diametrically opposed kinds of Humanity/Nature relationships revealed here.

OXY, a modern multinational company, is preoccupied with satisfying a worldwide demand for energy resources in a competitive race with other, similar companies. Participation in that race, in which time and space are decisive factors in productivity, has required it to accumulate capital, technology, science and power in order to advance in its objectives, strategies and goals. At the same time, this extenuating race has demanded that everything else be converted into a means to be subjected to said ends. To come to consider some other factor of its action "an end in itself" would drastically alter the workings of the company, its hierarchy of values, its competitiveness in the international market, its business efficiency...its very being.

The land, or rather, a territory (with the connotation of a support system for the biological species which in-

habit it and the connotation of the rich and complex relationships linking species and territories, making of each territory a specific sanctuary for Life) has value for the multinationals only as a factor of production and profitability. It has value as a means. It has no value in itself, but only the value that the end to which it is subsumed confers upon it: as a provider of fossil fuels, in a lucrative mode, for international capital. To put it in other words, for the multinationals, the earth is an interchangeable factor, with no inherent value, but with a price value that is measured in terms of profit.

But OXY is a modern company, and modernity, in

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***"For the multinationals, the earth is an interchangeable factor, with no inherent value, but with a price value that is measured in terms of profit."***

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our model of "civilization", has first-class citizenship and has had for many decades and centuries. Any "modernizing" activity is uncritically accorded priority value.

### ***What is "modern" or "modernity"?***

In colloquial language, "modern" is what revolves around technology, what reflects current tastes and usages, and what bears the connotation of "progress." Etymologically it derives from the Latin adjective *modernus*, which in turn comes from the adverb *modo*, referring to a "short period of time," seen either looking forward or looking back, i.e. recent, recently, a moment ago, in a moment, shortly. The adverb is also used, in a repetitive construction, to refer to sudden changes of habit: "*modo palliati, modo togati*" (Cicero) = "now they wear the pallio, now the toga". The essence of modernism is, then, a short time, either looking ahead, looking back, or in sequence.

Understood by the light of its very etymology, modernism implies above all else a dynamic of acceleration.

Acceleration in turn implies concentration and marginalization. Technological factors and economic processes (accumulation) are concentrated for the purpose of arriving at a proposed goal in a short period of time. When technology and capital are brought to the center, numerous other factors and values must necessarily remain on the outside. Certain nations and social strata necessarily remain excluded from the activated circuits of "modern" intensification and acceleration. That is the cost of modernization.

The end result of the growing importance of technology is the marginalization of those human dimensions which find priority of expression in the realm of ethics and religion: the dimensions of purpose, of meaning, of personal growth, of the inherent and non-interchangeable value of living beings.

The epistemology of business, that legitimate child of modernism, was becoming exhausted in technical knowledge and in the verifiable truths of "market productivity." It has exiled all other truths from its domain and consciously distanced itself from the world of values. This it relegates to the field of the "individual-subjective", making sure that this dimension is left with no rightful claim to insinuate itself back into social processes. What is more, it has reduced all considerations of end purpose to pragmatism, treating them as mere technical rather than ethical issues.

In this worldview, it is perfectly acceptable that hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on sending man-made explorers to the moon or to Mars, while millions of human beings die of hunger. It is perfectly acceptable that fossil fuels will be exhausted in a few years, leaving to the future artificially created necessities without solutions. It is satisfactory that 80% of the population of the world is left beyond the margin of the acceptable standard of living which the modern process of acceleration/accumulation has attained for the other 20% of humanity.

For this modern mentality, becoming entrenched in the defense of a non-commercial value of the land is something so full of holes and contrary to "civilization" that it well deserves any form of repression which will neutralize such "absurd pretensions." This was the only idea to be gleaned from the radio program *Desafíos* (Challenges) that aired on RCN (Radio Cadena Nacional) early in 1997, dedicated to the conflict of the U'wa v. OXY by journalist Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza, who concluded with the weak excuse with which he habitually replaces a lack of argu-

ments: "The guerrilla is behind this."

The radical difference between the worldviews that support the U'wa position and that of OXY is manifest in the defense the former are making for another value to their land. Theirs is a notion of land conceived in its integrity without excluding the subsoil, a full integrity which includes them with their history and their ancestors and spirits. It is a defense for its sacred, noncommercial value. These are separate worldviews, absolutely incompatible. There is no common platform that would permit a dialog.

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**B**ut if the Humanity/Nature relationship is drastically impoverished in the modern mentality, the disastrous effects of its commercial reductionism have become alarming to quite a number of "modern" intellectuals and even to many technocrats.

In one concrete example of the ecological effects of the exploitation of fossil fuels, Dr. Guillermo Perry Rubio, a person above suspicion, ex-Minister of Mines and Energy, ex-Minister of Finance and advisor to a significant number of multinationals, in his book *Petroleum Politics: Economy and the Environment* (1992), signals the dangers that both exploration as well as exploitation and transportation of hydrocarbons implies for the environment: <sup>1</sup>

Exploration: For a concession of 100,000 hectares, the contractor removes 36 strips of topsoil, each three meters wide, one kilometer apart. Twenty pounds of explosives, placed in cavities 20 meters deep, are detonated along each seismic line, at 100-meter intervals. The effect on the environment includes erosion and an increase in the load of sediment in surface run-off, as well as contamination from liquid and solid wastes generated by the workers of the exploring companies. The detonations produce drastic alterations in the lives of native people, plants and animals. Of 200,000 km of seismic lines traced in Colombia in the last 20 years, only two percent have been environmentally studied. For the drilling of each exploratory well, from two to five hectares are removed and between ten and fifteen hectares are changed as a result of the felling of trees, beyond those felled to make room for helicopter landings. The drilling generates a series of mud wastes which generally contain heavy metals and other toxic products; the water from well formation typically presents high temperatures; and some of the clay wastes of the wells show radioactive traits. The use of detergents, anticorrosives, and bactericides in the drilling

adds to the toxic waste. Carbon monoxide and dioxide as well as nitrous oxides and sulfur oxides, emitted during drilling activities, have harmful effects on the workers and on the surrounding vegetation. The burning of petroleum wastes generates compounds like 3, 4 benzopirene, which is a carcinogen and tends to accumulate biologically in the food chain. The oil wastes in pools near the wells causes contamination of the subterranean water. The vapor of volatile petroleum compounds is highly toxic.

Production: If the oil/water emulsion is not separated through physico-chemical processes, the formation water discharged into the environment (highly corrosive because of its high temperatures and high levels of chlorates, sulfates, heavy metals, phenol and toxic organic compounds) surpasses in volume the level of hydrocarbons extracted. (In Cano Limon, for every 200,000 barrels of crude oil produced, 220,000 barrels of water of formation are discharged into the streams). This alters the chemical conditions of the streams and their biological balance. The maintenance of the wells requires a chemical process of acidification with highly combustible acids; each acidification generates 8400 gallons of toxic residue. If the technique of recuperating a "second improved" extraction is used to obtain a higher yield of hydrocarbons, it means injections of water with additives of biocides, floculants, anticorrosives and calcium carbonate removers; within two years, highly contaminated waters such as these begin to be extracted along with the oil. If a "tertiary" technique is used to reclaim the well, this implies the production of vapor, which diminishes the surface water resources of the area.

Transportation of the oil means the construction of roads and pipelines, which encourages the felling of trees, displacing of native populations, destruction of ecosystems, erosion, leakage of sediments, and contamination of surface waters, as well as oil leaks.

The U'wa do not possess the technical sophistication for describing the disasters that await them if OXY attains its objectives, but they do take heed of them, from the standpoint of their worldview and in their own language, as profound traumas caused to the land, which they believe will implacably take revenge by punishing to the U'wa people. It is another way of saying the same thing,

1. Perry Rubio, Guillermo, *Política Petrolera: economía y medio ambiente*. Fescol/Cerec, Bogotá, 1992, pp.125-132.

from their ancestral wisdom.

It is not difficult, either, to visualize the destructive process that will result sociologically if OXY begins exploration. Initially the virgin lands of the U'wa will be criss-crossed by trucks and bulldozers that will open roads of penetration on which enormous machinery will arrive. Following these, attracted by opportunities for both minimum and privileged wages, there will come the human flow of migrants, molded by decades of short-term worker/boss relationships, rootless, unconnected to family or com-

munity, and accustomed to the compensatory practices of alcohol, prostitution and gambling. The U'wa population will find itself forcefully invaded by another culture, one fashioned by migratory capital, where multiple displacements have not only progressively extinguished all values tied to the land, to community, to family and to the ancestors, but have also caused the very identification of human dignity with the commercial value of exchange which the person as mere "work-force," or "factor of production," acquires before the enterprise through which he is sustained.

There would then be no need to threaten collective suicide, as the U'wa have, since the genocide would take place bloodlessly, in a subtle and irreversible process.

The conflict between OXY and the U'wa is a moving manifestation of the exacting logic and the perverse effects of modernization. The concentration of energy in some circuits, which accelerate in order to quickly reach their goal, ignores the destruction caused in all the other circuits whose energy is robbed to maintain the acceleration of the first.

The evolution of Ecology is successfully exposing the absurdity of this dynamic. It is calling for nature not to be reduced merely to a means within the profit-oriented voracity of capital. It calls for nature in its quality of value-in-itself to be respected, because its destruction will take with it some of the more profound dimensions of humanity. □

*Next Issue: Part II "Language and Power, the Conflict Between Science and Knowledge."*

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highest conflict areas of the country, it is impossible to imagine that the project will not result in significant environmental damage to the U'wa homeland. This is situated at the headwaters of the Orinoco river basin, which flows through sensitive rainforest ecosystems and other indigenous homelands on its way to the sea. All of this is threatened for three months of oil.

**Current Situation**

*"Now they say that the government wants to know our thoughts about the oil project, but if they don't like what we think, they will simply proceed with their own decisions." - Roberto Cobarria, President of the Traditional U'wa Authority*

In their search for justice the U'wa have turned to both national and international legal fora, neither of which has yet to fully recognize the U'wa's right to protect their land and culture. In early 1997, two contradictory rulings on the U'wa case were handed down by Colombian courts, with the Council of State's decision taking precedent. This ruling found that the States right to develop its natural resources, in this case oil, superseded the U'wa's constitutional right to consultation and

defense of its cultural identity. Looking internationally, the U'wa have recently petitioned the Inter-american Commission on Human Rights of the OAS to call for the project's cancellation in defense of the U'wa's human rights. Meanwhile, in response to a request from the Colombian government, the OAS in conjunction with Harvard University, has issued a series of recommendations in regards to the Samori block, intended to serve as a guide to resolve the conflict between the U'wa and oil interests. This report advocates several positive steps to be taken in favor of the U'wa, including an immediate and unconditional suspension of all oil activities in the Samori block, and the legal recognition of the U'wa's full traditional territory. However, it also recommends a process of consultation with the U'wa which is based on recognizing the Colombian's State's right to exploit oil over the U'wa's right to halt it. The OAS/Harvard path to conflict resolution, therefore, depends on the U'wa giving up both their position of resistance as well as their vow to collective suicide if the project goes ahead. These assumptions not only

disregard the U'wa's rights, but in the end could prove horribly tragic.

**What You Can Do**

Write Oxy and Shell asking them in your own words to cancel their plans for the Samori block. Let them know that you hold them responsible for the U'wa's welfare.

Dr. Ray R. Irani, CEO  
Occidental Petroleum Corp.,  
10889 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90024  
fax (310) 443-6922

Philip J. Carroll, CEO  
Shell Oil,  
P.O. Box 2463  
Houston, TX 77252  
fax:(713) 241-4044

**For More Information**

U'wa Project International  
phone/fax: (818) 505-8353  
uwaproject@aol.com  
<http://www.solcommunications.com/uwa.html>

Rainforest Action Network  
(415) 398-4404  
[rainforest@ran.org](mailto:rainforest@ran.org)  
<http://www.ran.org>

Project Underground  
(510) 705-8981  
[project\\_underground@moles.org](mailto:project_underground@moles.org)  
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The following excerpts are from urgent action requests received by Colombia Bulletin over the course of the last 3 months from Amnesty International, Red de Hermandad y Solidaridad, and others. The goal of this section is both to report such acts, as well as to encourage your involvement. The addresses of those to whom you may write are found on the next page. The source is given at the end of each excerpt.

### More ACIA Members Abducted

There is grave concern for the safety of members of Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato, (ACIA), Atrato United Peasant Farmers Association, after another of its members, Concepcion Perea Perea, was reportedly abducted on 28 July 1997 in the region around Quibdo, department of Chocó.

Concepcion Perea Perea is president of a coordinating committee of ACIA's family help program, Bienestar Familiar, Family Welfare, which takes provisions to poor communities in and around Atrato and the Arquia River in the region of Quibdo. On 26 July, while attempting to deliver provisions to needy families in the hamlet of las Mercedes, Concepcion was stopped by a group of unidentified gunmen blocking the route to the hamlet. The armed men forced him to leave the provisions, saying they would be returned to him when he brought proof he was from Bienestar Familiar.

On 28 July he returned with two colleagues to recover the provisions. The armed group reportedly forced him to take them to the river port of

Quibdo, where he kept the boat used for carrying supplies. That night the same boat was found upturned with the motors missing. According to reports, he was later seen bound and being escorted in a boat by paramilitary gunmen. He has not been seen since.

In the light of the abduction and continued 'disappearance' of Domingo Santos Cordoba and Ricardo Hernandez Garcia, Amnesty International fears that Concepcion Perea Perea may also have been abducted and is gravely concerned for his physical safety.

*Amnesty International UA 246/97 issued 30 July 1997*

### Peasant Activists Feared Murdered

Brothers Otoniel Barbosa Ardila and Daniel Barbosa Ardila, who have not been seen since 17 September 1997, are feared to have 'disappeared'. Amnesty International is deeply concerned for their safety.

Otoniel Barbosa Ardila reportedly travelled to the municipality of Pailitas, department of Cesar, on 17 September to collect his brother who had spent the previous night there. At about 5pm the two brothers were reported to have left Pailitas towards the community of El Burro where they were due to pick up some milk which they had left at the house of an acquaintance. They never arrived at the house.

Regular reports of "disappearances" in the department of Cesar, combined with a report that a paramilitary base of the Autodefensas Campesinas de Cordoba y Urabá (ACCU), Peasant Self-Defence

Groups of Cordoba and Urabá, is situated on the road between Pailitas and El Burro, on a ranch called Ucraina, has led to fears that the two brothers have been 'disappeared'.

The men are both members of the Junta de Accion Comunal, Community Action Council, of the community of Quebrada Seca. In the past, peasant farmer activists and other civic activists have often been labelled as guerrilla sympathizers and collaborators by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Many of those so labelled have subsequently become the victim of serious human rights violations.

In recent years community organizations in Pailitas and other communities throughout the south of Cesar have been the target of frequent human rights violations committed by paramilitary groups operating with the support and under the coordination of the armed forces. Failure by the Colombian Government to take sufficient action to ensure that these groups are dismantled, to bring members of the security forces responsible for supporting paramilitary groups and those responsible for human rights violations to justice, continues to leave community activists and others in the region exposed to the risk of human rights violations.

*Amnesty International UA 307/97 25 September 1997*

### National University Students Missing

Two students at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, National University of Colombia, in Bogotá, have been missing since late Sep-

tember 1997. Amnesty International fears that they may have 'disappeared' and is seriously concerned for their safety.

According to reports, Carlos Enrique Diaz, a member of the Comité Estudiantil de Derechos Humanos de la Facultad de Derecho, Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Student Human Rights Committee of the Faculty of Law, Political and Social Sciences, was last seen on 23 September by fellow members of the Human Rights Committee. His partner, Lina María Carrero, is reported to have been missing since the morning of 24 September when she last had contact with members of her family.

Concern for the couple's safety has been raised by reports that on 19 April Carlos Enrique Diaz was

stopped and questioned by two people who identified themselves as members of military intelligence.

*Amnesty International UA 313/97, 2 October 1997*

### Indigenous Leaders Murdered By Both the FARC and ACCU

On 14 October 1997, Edgar Domico, a member of the Embera Katio indigenous community, was reportedly abducted by members of the paramilitary organization, Peasant Self-Defence force of Cordoba and Uruba (ACCU), in the village of Pavarandocito, municipality of Mutata, department of Antioquia. He has not been seen since. Amnesty International is seriously concerned

for his safety.

On 13 October 1997, Mario Domico and his son David Domico, leaders of Embera Katio indigenous community of Aguas Claras, also in the municipality of Mutata, were reportedly dragged, from a meeting they were attending in the village of El Porroso, by members of, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Witnesses saw the two men being led away in different directions then heard shots being fired. The bodies of Mario Domico and David Domico were discovered close by the next day.

It is not known if Edgar Domico is related to Mario and David Domico.

Mario Domico was leader of the indigenous community of Mutatá

### Addresses

The following are addresses of officials in Colombia to whom you may want to write to demand action regarding urgent action requests. If you would like to be placed on an e-mail list of news and urgent action requests, send a message to <mlopez@igc.org>. Also, please send a copy of your letters to us at P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI 53701.

Dr. Ernesto Samper Pizano  
 Presidente de la República  
 Casa de Nariño  
 Carrera 8 N° 7-26  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571 2867434  
 esamper@presidencia.gov.co  
 Fax: 571-289-3377

Dr. José Fernando Castro  
 Defensor del Pueblo  
 Calle 35 No. 7 - 25, piso 5  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571-2840472  
 dpueblo@colnodo.apc.org

Gen. Manuel José Bonett Locarno  
 Comandante del Ejército Nacional  
 jbonnet@latino.net.co

Dr. Jaime Bernal Cuellar, Procurador  
 General de la Nación, Carrera 5,  
 N° 15-80, Santafé de Bogotá  
 Fax (+ 571) 281 7531 or 342 9723

Dr. Horacio Serpa Uribe  
 Ministro del Interior  
 Cra. 8 No. 8 - 09  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571 281-5884

U.S. Embassy  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571-315-2209

Dr. Orlando Vasquez Velasquez  
 Procurador General de la Nación  
 Carrera 5, N 15-80  
 Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax (571) 284 04 72 or 342 97 23

Dr. María Emma Mejía  
 Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores  
 Calle 10 No.5-51  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571-341-6777

Dr. Gilberto Echeverri Mejia  
 Ministerio de Defensa Nacional  
 Ave. El Dorado  
 Car. 52 CAN  
 Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia  
 Fax: 571-222-1874

Ambassador Juan Carlos Esguerra  
 Embassy of Colombia  
 2118 Leroy Pl. NW  
 Washington, DC 20008  
 Phone: (202)387-8338  
 Fax: (202)232-8643 or 387-0176  
 emb@colombiaemb.org

and worked as a health promoter and adviser to the community leadership. He and his son were also both leaders and founders of the Organizacion Indigena de Antioquia, (OIA), Indigenous Organization of Antioquia, which is responsible for the indigenous reserves in the department of Antioquia. David Domico was a teacher in the village of El Porroso, but had been forced to resign after reportedly receiving death threats from one of the active armed groups in the region.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the killing and abduction of indigenous community members in the department of Antioquia by both paramilitary forces and armed opposition groups. The organization is urgently calling on the authorities to provide effective protection to those communities at risk. *Amnesty International UA 333/97, 27 October 1997*

### **Zenu Indigenous Leaders Abducted and Murdered**

On 31 October 1997 Virgilio Cardenas Feria, a Zenu Indian and national director of Movimiento Indigena Colombiano (MIC), Colombian Indigenous Movement, was abducted by armed men in military uniform while in the community of Los Andes Recuperacion, part of the indigenous lands of San Andres de Sotavento, department of Cordoba. His whereabouts are unknown and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for his safety.

On 2 November 1997 Bernabela Riondo Pacheco and Santiago Palo, both Zenu Indians from the community of Bajo Grande, also in San Andres de Sotavento, were dragged from their homes and into a waiting

vehicle by four heavily armed men who reportedly identified themselves as members of the Colombian army. Bernabela Riondo Pacheco and Santiago Palo were subsequently shot and killed. Their bodies were found a few hours later in the streets of the indigenous community of Achiote, municipality of Sanpues, Cordoba.

According to reports, the group of armed men were also looking for the recently-elected Zenu local councillor, Nixon Surita, but were unable to find him. Amnesty International remains concerned for his safety.

Bernabela Riondo Pacheco has been a long standing indigenous activist, including having served as secretary of the Organizacion Nacional Indigena de Colombia (ONIC), National Indigenous Organization of Colombia. She also coordinated the recent successful local election campaign of Nixon Surita. Three other Zenu Indians also won seats in the area in the same elections.

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Zenu political leaders and activists as well as all other members of the indigenous community in San Andres de Sotavento.

*Amnesty International UA 356/97 12 November 1997*

### **Council Members "Disappeared" in Apartadó**

Three men from the community of San José de Apartadó, department of Antioquia, are reported to have "disappeared" after being abducted by paramilitary gunmen on 6 October 1997. Amnesty International is deeply concerned for their safety.

According to information received by Amnesty International, the

abduction took place in the community of La Cristalina, two hours walk from San José de Apartadó, as a group of 20 San José inhabitants were returning home. The paramilitary gunmen reportedly demanded to see Luis Hernando Goes, Luis Fernando Aguirre and Ramiro Correa's identity papers and then abducted the three men. They have not been seen since.

San José de Apartadó is situated in the conflict-torn region of Urabá. In May 1997, the community declared itself a Comunidad de Paz, Peace Community, in an attempt to persuade the warring parties to respect its neutrality and the right to life of its inhabitants. Many of these inhabitants are civilians displaced by the armed conflict from other localities in the region. Throughout 1997 those living in San José de Apartadó have faced threats and killings committed by guerrilla forces and paramilitary groups. Since the community declared itself a Comunidad de Paz over 30 of its inhabitants have been killed, the vast majority by paramilitary groups. The detention of the three men named above took place in the context of joint paramilitary/army operations in the region which began last week.

Ramiro Correa is a member of the Consejo Interno, Council of San José de Apartadó. Fear for his safety and that of the other two men is heightened by the paramilitary killing on 17 May 1997 of Francisco Tabarquino, another member of the council. Community activists and leaders in Colombia are frequently labelled as guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators by the security forces and their paramilitary allies. Many subsequently become the victims of human rights violations.

On 7 October 1997, 200 residents of San José de Apartadó, to-

gether with representatives of non-governmental human rights organizations, left their community to go to La Cristalina to endeavour to locate the three men.

UA 318/97 7 October, 1997

## Paramilitary Terror Continues in Chocó

On 6 October 1997, a paramilitary group entered the village of Argelia in the municipality of El Carmen de Atrato, department of Chocó and abducted and killed Julio Alberto Montoya Ruiz. A second man, Ramon Uran, was also abducted but managed to escape. After reportedly abusing and beating other members of the community, the group threatened to return the next day at midday and kill anyone who remained in the village. Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of the villagers.

After abducting and killing Julio Alberto Montoya Ruiz the group reportedly visited his family home in search of Alonso Montoya, Jaime Montoya and Honorio Uran. Unable to find them they proceeded to drag the other family members out of the house, beating the mother, Marina Rivera, and setting fire to the house.

As a consequence of the actions and threats of the paramilitary group, over 300 inhabitants of the village of Argelia fled their homes to seek safety in the municipal capital of El Carmen de Atrato.

On 8 October, members of the community of Argelia held a meeting in the presence of representatives of the International Red Cross, members of the municipal authorities, local ombudsmen and the military. As a consequence the displaced villagers were guaranteed safe return to

their homes by the armed forces.

Amnesty International is concerned that if decisive action is not taken to dismantle paramilitary groups operating in the region, with the support of the security forces, the security of the inhabitants of Argelia cannot be guaranteed.

UA 322/97 14 October 1997

## COLSINGUE Paras Attack Housing Cooperative

At 9pm on 15 November 1997, members of the paramilitary group Colombia Sin Guerrilla, (COLSINGUE), Colombia Without Guerrillas, attacked the Inaia-Sue housing cooperative in Tenjo, department of Cundinamarca, killing Leonardo Tibaquirá, the project caretaker. Buildings and cars belonging to members of the cooperative were machine-gunned by the paramilitary group. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the physical safety of the 32 families who own properties in the Inaia-Sue housing cooperative.

After the attack, COLSINGUE issued a statement acknowledging its responsibility and saying: 'Le ordenamos a todos los residentes guerrilleros de esta organizacion abandonar sus viviendas, pues han sido considerados objetivo militar de nuestra organizacion', ('We order all guerrilla residents of this organization to leave their homes as our organization considers them to be military targets.')

A month earlier, on 8 October 1997, the Colombian media reported that the official Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, (DAS), Civilian Intelligence Service, was

carrying out preliminary investigations into links between the armed opposition group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, (FARC), Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, and members of the Inaia-Sue housing cooperative. The reports were later confirmed by the director of the DAS, General Luis Enrique Montenegro Rinco. People accused by the security forces of having links with guerrilla groups have often subsequently been targeted for human rights violations by paramilitary groups.

COLSINGUE first appeared in 1994 and has been responsible for the extrajudicial execution of trade unionists, human rights defenders and social activists. Many of these attacks have occurred after the security forces accused the victims of being guerrilla sympathizers. COLSINGUE is widely reported to have very close links with the security forces.

Amnesty International UA 360/97 17 November 1997

### Help Spread The Word

Please help distribute *Colombia Bulletin* to people concerned with human rights in Colombia and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. If you know individuals or groups that would like to read this magazine, or know of cooperatives and/or bookstores that may like to carry it, please send us \$5.00 for postage and handling, and the names of the groups, co-ops, or stores that may carry them, and we will send you 10 copies of *Colombia Bulletin*.

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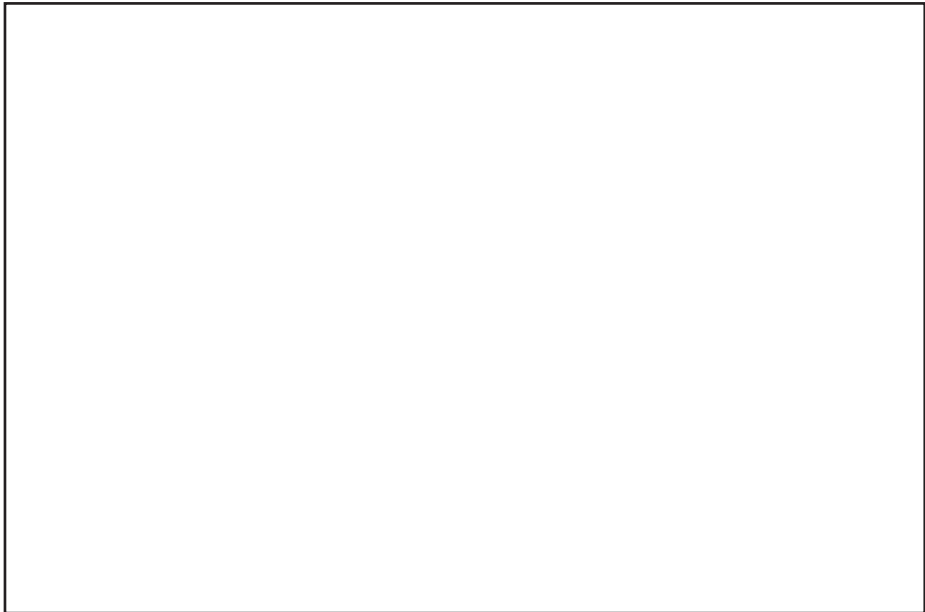
# Our Dreams

We have a dream  
That one day in the green fields of Cali,  
Sugar cane peasants, bricklayers, wind-  
shield cleaners  
Will be able to enjoy rights equal to those of their  
Masters, managers, politicians  
And live together in a fair, wonderful nation.

We have a dream  
That one shiny day, even Cali,  
A city that sheds tears of blood,  
Will rise  
To a peaceful paradise of harmonious  
brotherhood.

We have a dream  
That the children of the future  
Will one day live in a new Colombia  
Where they will not be judged by what they wear,  
But by what they hold in their hearts.

We have a dream  
That one day every person will be recognized  
As what he is, a respectable human being,  
That through rough times, we may find support  
And let our destiny guide our souls  
And God be the leader of our lives.  
We shall then succeed as equals, now and forever.  
This is our hope. □



Graphic by Yafeth

We have a dream  
That one day, on the Andes Mountain Range,  
The children of the indians and those of the blacks  
And the descendents of the racists  
Will be able to sit down together  
At the table of human brotherhood.

We have a dream  
That one day even Uraba,  
A place flooded by the blood of the innocent,  
Will be transformed  
Into a gulf of respect and peace.

We have a dream that we, and our children,  
Will one day live in a new sublime country  
Where we will not be judged  
By the disguise we wear for concealment  
But by the authentic richness of our character.

We have a dream  
That every guerrilla member will be reformed,  
Every self-centered wealthy man will share,  
The heartless ones will reveal a heart,  
And the drug abusers will be cured,  
And the glory of Jesus will reach every human hand  
And all our thoughts and feelings will come together.

*These two poems were written by 8th graders in Cali, and printed in their school's newspaper Tribuna in Spring '97, with the following introduction: "Martin Luther King Jr was a man of peace who preached love, tolerance, respect, and who truly believed that ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. His dream of a better world, verbalized three decades ago, five years before he was assassinated, was based*

*upon these values and continues to be the dream of many of us. Colegio Bolivar's entire 8th Grade Class — 89 true citizens — have worked together to echo this man's dream as they reflected upon our country and our people at a time when COLOMBIA needs us most. MAY THEIR DREAM SOME DAY COME TRUE. MAY THEY BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE."*

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