

Action on Colombia

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The Paramilitization of Urabá

By Daniel Bland
(Published Originally in *Colombia Hoy*)

María Elena lost her mother and sister on February 21, six days after the Protocol II agreement of the Geneva conventions, established to respect the neutrality of the civilian population in a country's armed conflict, was officially signed into force in Colombia. She lives in the tiny hamlet of Las Casas, half an hour northeast of the town of Turbo in the department of Antioquia.

"The paramilitaries arrived at about 10:30 and came directly to our house. They grabbed my mother and sister, tied their hands and threw them on the floor. They were guerrillas, they said, and for guerrillas they had a special treatment." María Elena paused to clear her throat and wipe her eyes. "They dragged them out and off 100 yards or so. We were too afraid to even go out. When we did, we found their bodies. They had cut their heads off and opened their stomachs up with machetes. As they left they said we had six months to leave; that they'd be back to burn what and whoever was left."

Strategic Importance of Urabá

With access by land and water to the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean and through the Darien gap to Central America, the Urabá region in northwestern Colombia is as strategic a zone as exists anywhere in Colombia. The region is rich and fertile; bananas grown in central Urabá generated US\$400 million in 1995, in addition to rubber and hardwood exports, and there are half a million head of cattle grazing in northern Urabá. Hundreds of millions of dollars worth of contraband, arms and drugs in particular, enter and leave Colombia each year through the Gulf of Urabá. Legal and illegal economic interests are at the root of a vicious paramilitary campaign to wipe out the guerrilla presence, real or perceived, in the entire Urabá region.

Paramilitary Violence in Turbo, Urabá

Turbo, a town of 65,000 on the Gulf of Urabá, and the Panamerican highway have been dominated by the

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Gloria Cuartas (R), Mayor of Apartadó, visited Wisconsin in April 1995. Here she is greeted by Sister Maureen McDonnell at Edgewood College. Mayor Cuartas was named 'Colombian Woman of the Year' in March -- and in April had assassins stalking her because of her opposition to violence.

U.S. Communities Mobilize to Support Peace in Colombia

Reign of Terror in Apartadó; Mayor Cuartas Threatened by Gunmen

This spring and summer have been quite tense, from our vantage point in Madison, Wisconsin, as we have received disheartening phone calls from Apartadó where the reign of terror by paramilitary gunmen has increased.

Easter evening (4/7/96) we spoke with Gloria Cuartas: "On Wednesday evening, paramilitary gunmen, firing indiscriminately from a pickup truck, murdered 11 people in the Policarpa neighborhood. Easter Thursday and Friday were horrible." Minutes before, she had gotten a call saying two trucks full of armed men were driving around Apartadó.

Gloria Cuartas has spoken out and criticized the Colombian Government for refusing to stop the violence in Apartadó. She said what many suspected all along -- the paramilitary death squads are funded by some cattle ranchers and banana plantation owners, in alliance with druglord Fidel Castaño.

On April 9, we received word that 3 assassins (El Tigre, El Burro and El Alacran) were in Apartadó with the explicit mission of murdering Gloria Cuartas, with a 50 million peso (~\$US50,000) contract out on her. CSN immediately issued an urgent

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paramilitaries since mid-1995. Since then, according to a priest in one of the town's three parishes, there have been about 10 disappearances a week and bodies are found almost every morning along the road leading out of town and on to Apartadó.

"That first morning, we woke up and most of the businesses had been painted during the night with graffiti announcing the arrival of the paramilitaries (ACCU). Businesses are forced to pay a tax to the paramilitaries. Because one of the paramilitary leaders in the town is an ex-guerrilla, the group knows everyone who used to pay the guerrilla tax. The families and friends of those who did so 'soluntarily' have all been killed or have left.

ACCU Paramilitary group

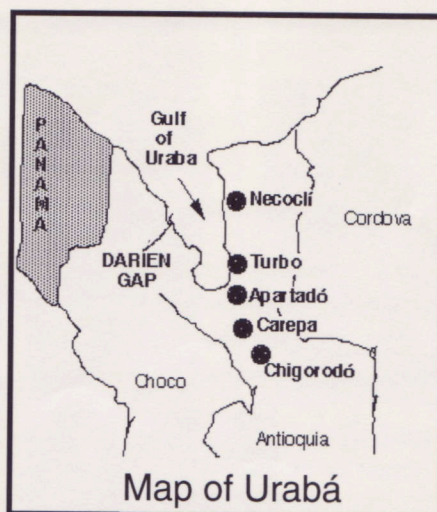
The ACCU (Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba and Urabá, or Peasant Self-defense League of Córdoba and Urabá) were created in the late 1980's by millionaire landowner Fidel Castaño. Working closely with military and police officers, they soon dominated the department. Today, Fidel and his brother Carlos command a paramilitary army estimated at between 1,000 and 1,200 and have their sights set on Urabá.

Resistance in One Town

Punta de Piedra is a tiny community of 60 living in 15 or 20 shacks. The residents are people who were displaced from their previous town late last year. Most of them built shacks with wood retrieved from the houses they left behind.

On February 12, the paramilitaries arrived again: "They came early, one of them wearing a hood, and said that two of us had to go with them. We told them no; that we knew the two men had nothing to do with the guerrilla and that we wouldn't let them go. After more discussion and threats of returning to take more of us, they left."

This example of a community's courage and resistance to the paramilitaries spread by word of mouth throughout the area and the next Sunday in churches throughout Turbo sermons touched on the case. **"Don't turn off your lights and shut your doors when they come. If it's your neighbor one day, it could be you the next."** Posters put up in the back of churches



proclaimed: **'Solidarity! Your indifference makes you an accomplice.'**

Prosperity of Towns Controlled by Paramilitaries

This desolate panorama changes abruptly in El Totumo, 20 minutes further up the coast. Sunday morning in the town of 2,000 is alive with music, children playing and three Protestant churches in full swing. A huge graffiti is visible upon entering the town **"Sapos (informants) - we'll kill you one by one. Just wait and see. ACCU."** The town is prosperous compared to the others further down the road and under complete control of the paramilitaries. Those who haven't left or been killed are now with them.

Paramilitary Strategies

According to analysts of the paramilitary strategy in Urabá, the groups operate in predictable, military like fashion as they sweep through the countryside. "They arrive in large groups, almost always with several hooded individuals. First, they capture a number of residents, accusing them of being or collaborating with the guerrillas. Then they announce their intention to 'clean up' the zone, order all businesses closed and tell anyone disagreeing with their plans to leave. Then they kill their captives, almost always torturing them first in public and frequently decapitating them. That's one key to their strategy. Through the absolute ruthlessness of their actions, the seeds of terror are sown. Before they go they announce when they'll be back. What choice do the people have? They leave.

Paramilitary Activities in Pueblo Bello

Thirty miles and an hour's drive to the east of Turbo is Pueblo Bello, a town occupied by the paramilitaries since February 22. Early that morning, "they gathered everyone together in the kiosk beside the church and outlined their plans to establish a base here and charge businesses and residents a 'tax' to support their activities. When they finished, they dumped a huge stockpile of weapons on the ground and told everyone to take one. Today, about 90 of the town's 100 families have weapons in the house and we are living a nightmare."

"The paramilitaries broke the lock on the primary school and regularly sit in on classes, looking through the teachers' notebooks and lesson plans. Groups of them sleep there at night. They enter the church armed. **They go wherever they want and do whatever they like. They own the town. Children as young as 12 and 13 are with them, some of them can hardly carry the weapons they have been given. It's pathetic.**"

Colombian Army Cooperation with Paramilitaries in Pueblo Bello

"There are two large groups in Pueblo Bello. Those here in town are the group's 'eyes and ears.' They all have rifles and radios and are given free food by the paramilitaries. The other group is in the countryside. They have automatic weapons, grenades, walkie talkies and are being trained militarily. They receive US\$200.00 a month and are essentially patrolling, widening the paramilitaries' radius of action little by little towards Turbo. The groups rotate." On March 3, during a combat between paramilitaries and guerrillas in the neighboring hamlet of La Esperanza, two paramilitaries were seriously wounded. An army helicopter landed and evacuated them, apparently to Medellín.

Internal Displacement of Civilians

The most obvious result of this paramilitary advance is a massive exodus of families. According to the Defensoría del Pueblo, more than 4,000 families and 25,000 people were displaced in 6 months between December 1994 and May 1995. Today, there are probably twice that many, by far the continent's largest internal migration in such a short period.

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CSN and the Dane County-Apartadó Sister Communities Project would like to thank the several hundred people from all over the U.S. who so generously supported our efforts to present an alternative viewpoint in the Colombian media, to

call for peace in one of the most conflictive regions of Colombia, and to draw attention to political prisoners of Apartadó who remain locked up under the provisions of 'Faceless Justice'. Here is a translation of the ad.

Open Letter to the Colombian Public-- Published in *El Colombiano* (Medellín) in early June

We, the undersigned, are North Americans and others who are deeply disturbed by the human rights situation in Colombia.

Massacres, disappearances and torture happen continually in the anguished region of Uraba. We can not understand how paramilitary groups operate so freely in this militarized region where the Colombian army is present in massive numbers, and which does not perform its constitutional function of defending the civilian population. And we can not understand why the regional paramilitary leader is not apprehended and brought to justice for his crimes against humanity.

We call upon all armed parties -- paramilitary units, guerrillas, army, police, urban militias and commandos -- to immediately cease all attacks upon both the civilian population and upon each other. Justice, peace and a fruitful life is never found through murder, torture, kidnapping and intimidation.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the U.S. government gave the Colombian government millions of dollars to institute "Faceless Justice", which was supposed to protect judges and others from narcoterrorism. Without question, in reality many of the cases are NOT narcoterrorists -- but include community leaders, trade-unionists and ordinary people. We feel ashamed that the U.S. government, under the guise of the "War on Drugs", assisted the Colombian government in creating a juridical system that would never be accepted within the United States -- a system where it is virtually impossible to prove your innocence.

We call attention to the use of 'Faceless Justice' in the case of the detained former Mayors of Apartadó Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo Nuñez, accused of being the masterminds of La Chinita massacre of 1994 (case #20397-2635 of the Regional Judge of Medellín). According to sworn affidavits, their political enemies manufactured evidence which is being manipulated for political reasons. A major Catholic Church official has stated that he believes Jose Antonio Lopez is innocent. We urge the Colombian authorities to provide LEGAL DUE PROCESS to those accused in this case.

We ask the Colombian mass media for objectivity in its reports and that it stop condemning, without presenting all the facts, Apartadó's former mayors Jose Antonio Lopez Bula and Nelson Campo Nuñez. We shall continue to denounce human rights violations until there is peace and justice and respect for all in Colombia.

Signed by: Ed Asner (Los Angeles, CA), Tammy Baldwin - Representative, State Assembly (Madison, WI), Medea Benjamin (San Francisco, CA), Phillip Berrigan (Baltimore, MD), Blase Bonpane, Ph.D. (Los Angeles, CA), Roy Bourgeois (Luther, LA), Noam Chomsky (Lexington, MA), John Dear (Richmond, VA), Archbishop Thomas Gumbleton (Detroit, MI), Douglas LaFollette - Wisconsin Secretary of State (Madison, WI), Robert Meeropol (Springfield, MA), Martin Sheen (Los Angeles, CA), William Thiesenhusen, Ph.D. (Univ of Wisconsin-Madison), Mike Verver - Councilman, City Council (Madison, WI), Haskell Wexler (Los Angeles, CA), Colombia Support Network (Madison, WI) Dane County-Apartadó Sister Communities Project (Madison, WI), Chicago Colombia Human Rights Committee (Chicago, IL), Colombia Multimedia Project (New York, NY), Common Courage Press (Monroe, ME), Community Action on Latin America (Madison, WI), Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace (Genesee, NY), Office of the Americas (Los Angeles, CA), Veterans for Peace (Port Matilda, PA), U.S.-Guatemala Labor Education Project (Chicago, IL), Wisconsin Coordinating Council on Nicaragua (Madison, WI), Wisconsin Interfaith Committee on Latin America (Madison, WI), Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice (Cleveland, OH), Christa Acker (Solon, OH), Julaine Allen (Spring Green, WI), Lynn Alten (Madison, WI), Gloria-Jeanne Anderson (Milwaukee, WI), Teeter Anderson (Milwaukee, WI), Frances Anderson (Windsor, OH), Renee Leilani Arakawa (Madison, WI), Clark Arrington (Boston, MA), Jackie Austin (Oregon, WI), Jo-Anne Bacciolo (Wethersfield, CT), Susan Bailey (Genesee, NY), Thomas Baker (Chicago, IL), Vivian Balester (Cleveland Heights, OH), Rev Ann Barner (Cleveland, OH), Len Barron (Boulder, CO), Sophie Bartell (Cleveland Heights, OH), Greg Bates (Monroe, ME), Mary Kay Baum (Dodgeville, WI), Laura Beldiman (Northampton, MA), Rev. 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**Call for a Conference:
Faceless Justice in the Americas
University of Wisconsin-Madison
March 2-5, 1997**

CSN has begun to plan for a Conference in March 1997, to draw attention to the little known phenomenon of "Faceless Justice" which has been established with the support of the U.S. government in two nations (Colombia and Peru), has been attempted in El Salvador, and has features currently being attempted in Mexico.

"Faceless Justice" entails an overturning of established legal proceedings with extreme curtailment of the defendant's rights -- witnesses and evidence are hidden from the defendant and his/her attorney, making defense (discovery, rebuttal) virtually impossible. Colombia and Peru's experiences are unique, but the US and local governments have used "extraordinary conditions = narco/guerrilla terrorism" -- as an excuse for these draconian tactics that would seem more at home in a totalitarian society, than, say, the 'model democracy of Colombia'.

Colombia, Peru, and Mexico do have longstanding social and political turmoil, to which Faceless Justice presents a new modality of political repression -- but it is aimed not at druglords or

guerrillas, but rather at a growing civil society. In Colombia, in particular, this has been aimed at the third party known as the Patriotic Union, as well as trade unionists (Telecom workers).

In Peru, the recent case of Lori Berenson, a North American woman sentenced to life imprisonment for 'terrorism' is just the tip of the iceberg of faceless justice in Peru. The U.S. attempted to put Faceless Justice into effect in El Salvador in 1995, but was rebuked. In Mexico, the uprising in Chiapas and the falling apart of the traditional political setup have provoked repression by the state, with apparent "faceless justice" features.

And in the U.S. we see the same rationale, "stopping the drug-dealers" and "catching the terrorists before they bomb again" being used to ease aspects of Faceless Justice into the US legal system.

This conference will be the first opportunity for both scholars and activists to meet, discuss the current situation, and make plans for both research and action.

Contact the Colombia Support Network to get involved and to become an endorser.

Keynote speaker: Noam Chomsky

Initial Endorsers: Latin American and Ibero American Studies Program, UW-Madison; Colombia Support Network; Dane County-Apartadó Sister Communities Project; WI Interfaith Committee on Latin America

Ambassador Frechette Angers Colombian Military War on Drugs, or War Against the People?

Human rights activists in Colombia charge that funds given by the U.S. to Colombia for the purpose of supporting the "War on Drugs" have, in reality, been used in a vicious campaign against civilians suspected of being guerrilla sympathizers. The purpose of this campaign is apparently to destroy the base of support for the guerrilla movement. Human Rights Reports originating from the U.S. State Department fail to point out the Colombian government's complicity in the violence against civic, labor, religious, and indigenous leaders. One common thread in the U.S. propaganda has been that Colombia is justified in eradicating the guerrilla movement because the guerrillas are highly involved in the drug trade. Reagan's Ambassador Tambs' name was associated with the so-called doctrine of the "narcoguerrilla" that ties responsibility for the drug trade to the guerrillas.

U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Frechette recently spoke at meeting at the Escuela Superior de Guerra with representatives of the Colombian military. During this meeting Frechette made some surprising comments.

Unlike previous U.S. propaganda, his comments acknowledged that those responsible for the drug trade are not the same as those leading the guerrilla movement.

When asked by a high official why the United States has not declared war against the narcoguerrilla, Frechette responded, "because we don't have evidence that the guerrillas are processing and exporting cocaine to the United States." In addition, Frechette questioned why none of the 50 druglords who have been detained has been convicted. Frechette also commented that the eradication of illegal drug crops has been a failure because soon after the crops have been fumigated they are replanted.

Alfredo Molano Bravo, Colombian writer and political commentator, does not dispute that "the guerrillas are responsible for kidnapping, killing, and robberies." In addition, he says "they extort money from drug traffickers and from large scale growers in order to finance their military operations." However, Molano states, "it is not advantageous to the guerrilla movement as an organization to become

involved in the planting, harvesting, processing and export of drugs for a variety of reasons. The trafficking of coca requires a lot of people, labor, and effort that would slow down the guerrilla's military goals. Furthermore, direct involvement in drug trafficking would not serve them well politically because drug trafficking leads to lack of discipline, corruption and moral decay. The guerrillas do what is necessary to finance a war that is each day more expensive and they avoid that which in the long term they perceive as being counterproductive to their political and military projects."

Alfredo Molano Bravo takes Frechette's statements to be a positive sign that could lead to new possibilities for a political solution to the unrest that plagues Colombia. Molano says "Frechette opened a new chapter in the war against drugs by separating the issue of drug trafficking from the issue of subversion. For those of us who continue, in spite of everything, to work for peace, the new doctrine is a light at the end of the tunnel that was created by those who wish to impede any political solution to the conflict. The position of Frechette.... places the United

Support the Struggle for Human Dignity in Colombia Please give generously when a CSN volunteer calls during our annual CSN Phone-a-thon in August

The Colombia Support Network has been working for several years, to build solidarity with the people of Colombia, particularly with our sister community of Apartadó, and to educate and inform the people of not only Wisconsin but many other regions of the U.S. where no source of information exists. We have survived thanks to the moral and financial support of people like you. All of our money has gone to printing and postage (for this newsletter, which goes out to nearly 2500 people, plus action bulletins), for reprinting articles to send out to folks asking for information, for delegations between Colombia and the U.S., and for telephone, fax and internet expenses necessary to keep the communication lines open.

We recently were able to hire a part-time office manager, to help us try to better organize ourselves and to increase our effectiveness, thanks to a generous grant from the Programa Por La Paz (Bogota). We have several projects that require our attention and will require funding to reach fruition: assisting in the production and distribution of the first ever English language magazine on human rights in Colombia "Justicia y Paz", in conjunction with Intercongregational Commission of Justice and Peace in Bogota, and in organizing a Conference on Faceless Justice in the Americas. For this we seek funds to bring community, labor and legal activists from Mexico, Peru and El Salvador together with their counterparts from Colombia. Please give generously when our volunteer calls on you in August.

Also, if you are in the Madison or Milwaukee area and could help make phone calls one evening in mid-August, contact Nell at CSN. Everyone who has helped in the past has agreed that it is fun and for a good cause!

If you would prefer that no one disturb you with a phone call, you could mail in the form to the right and note that you'd prefer no calls.

Yes! I want to help stop the violence in Colombia.

Here is my contribution to the Colombia Support Network and the Dane County/Apartadó Sister Communities Project:

☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 Other \$

☐ I would like to get involved. Please contact me.

Name

No phone calls
please ☐

Address

City State ZIP

Phone Fax/email

Mail to: Colombia Support Network, P.O. Box 1505, Madison WI 53701

Checks made out to WICOLA-Colombia Support are tax-deductible.

Continued from Previous Page

States as a possible future mediator in this conflict.... The position of Frechette also demonstrates that a new understanding is emerging. The issue of illegally grown crops could go to the negotiation table as a question of Agrarian Reform rather than one of fumigation, as a plan of crop substitution rather than violence. Doing away with the sale of coca implies sacrificing the current land holding system, which is precisely what those in control don't want. After all, the blood that is shed in this war is not the blood of the large landholders, rather the blood of peasants, whether they be on the side of the military or the guerrillas."

Continued from Front Page

action alert, focusing upon the U.S.-military connections of the Colombian military officers in charge of the region: General Ivan Ramirez Quintero, Urabá commander, has long ties with death squads in the Magdalena Medio region and elsewhere. In 1983, he received a "strategic intelligence course" in Washington, D.C. And the General in immediate power in Apartadó is Rito Alejandro del Rio Rojas, A GRADUATE OF THE SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS.

Dozens of letters and faxes from around the U.S. were sent to the State Department and to Ambassador Frechette in Bogotá, requesting that these mens' connections with the U.S. be examined and that no visas be issued to them to visit the U.S. (a standard perk for offi-

cers like these). The letters and faxes worked! There was a somewhat noticeable let up in the level of violence in Apartadó, as the Colombian military and establishment knew that THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING APARTADO.

In June, CSN received a request from an NGO working with refugees, asking for letters to the Colombian officials, for urgent relief to assist the hundreds of refugees crowded inside the Apartadó soccer stadium, because they have forced to abandon their lands in other parts of Urabá by the paramilitary terror. Contact CSN or view our web page for more details.

We thank all of you who have MADE A DIFFERENCE and supported the cause of human dignity in Colombia, and helped safeguard the peacemakers there.

Letters to Box 1505

Email to csn@igc.org

9 March 1996

I just read your latest newsletter and it was great! Yes, the struggle continues among the brave people in Colombia and the caring people here. Keep up the fight--justice will one day be won--and then love and peace will be all in all.

Warm regards, Tim Columbus, WI

16 March 1996

Thank you for the work you are doing regarding the human rights issues in Colombia! We appreciate the postings we get through our rapid response network here in Colorado, and we respond monthly to cases we hear about (corn@igc.apc.org). I had a general question for anyone there who might be able to help. I am interested in finding out about other NGO's (besides yourselves) who work within Colombia, doing humanitarian, medical, adult literacy, education or rural development work on site. I would also be interested in speaking to anyone who has lived and worked in Colombia recently. Please respond to the above address. Thank you,
Susan Colorado

26 March 1996

I would be happy to sign your letter to the Colombian people. I would be interested in helping with a contribution in the future, I have supported groups like your in the past (I even canvassed for Greenpeace). I am currently stabilizing myself, just recently finishing the student thing. Good luck with your efforts- your work is greatly appreciated.
Ken La Crosse, WI

28 March 1996

Hello. My name is Pedro, I am a Colombian who today discovered CSN while browsing the Net in search of something that could bring me back some memories from home.

I just wanted to tell you how happy it makes me to realize that people in this country do notice how harsh life can be in my country. Recognizing my people's courage in living in such conditions is also something of importance. Colombians are not only victims of a war that has and will be going on for a while, but we are also individuals who go beyond tragedies to live in a colorful and rich country.

I would really like to know how, as a Colombian, I could help your organization. I am only a college student in Colorado but I love my country with a passion and I will support it no matter what. Fate brought me to your "web-site" so now I offer you my knowledge and availability. Thank you.
-- Pedro (Colorado)

29 March 1996

Thanks for the e-mail which I just received a moment ago. Regarding the articles for the webpage we're also just beginning to build up our own service in the web and count on the support of the other German speaking sections of Amnesty International. Here in Austria we have re-founded the coordination group for Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador with the focus on Colombia (of course). We're trying to provide, not only the members of AI with information about the Human Rights abuses in Colombia, but also a broader, but still interested public (e.g. the visitors of your website).

In Austria there are some women's groups, church organizations (like Caritas) and the Casa Colombiana, which is an organization of Colombians living in Austria and who are quite critical about things going on in Colombia at least on some issues. All in all I hope that I can send you some material next time and I'm looking forward to the books and your reply.

-- Stefan (Austria)

9 April, 1996

We are glad to be able to sign the ad, however, our financial situation does not permit a large donation at this time. Both Gary and I are between jobs and Jeff is a student struggling to pay his tuition. I will send a donation when I am able. Good luck with the project. In solidarity, Babette Milwaukee, WI

26 April 1996

Me gustaria tener mas informacion acerca de la organizacion, especificamente quienes son los directores y miembros, si puedes mandar una lista con direcciones de internet seria fabuloso. Soy Colombiano y vivo en los E.E. U.U. A.A. pero tambien soy muy escamoso asi que antes de pertenecer al grupo me gustaria tener mas informacion.

-- Giovanni (Minnesota)

Colombia: The Genocidal Democracy

by

Javier Giraldo, S.J.

with an Introduction

by Noam Chomsky

Common Courage Press,

100 pages

Available July 1996

Paperback \$10.00

Order from CSN;

include \$2 for shipping

**Special Offer: receive a free
copy of the book with any
donation to CSN over \$40**

May 28

Friends: Here is a small donation of \$3. Please send info on how to join the Colombia Support Network. Thanks.

-- John, DuBois, PA

(Thanks, John, for joining CSN and sending in your \$25 membership donation!)

29 May 1996

This brief letter is to request whatever information you might be able to send regarding CSN and your activities that we might be able to plug into. We'll be very busy between now and the end of August with planning actions at the Democratic National Convention but after that we may be able to do some work on solidarity/support efforts on Colombia.

-- Kevin NW Suburban Direct Action,
Palatine, IL

1 June 1996

Please count this \$10 as an anonymous donation. I don't want my 9 yr-old avid reader to see your newsletter. I feel there is plenty of time left for that sort of horror later in life - children need to be sheltered.

-- P.H. Madison, WI

20 June 1996

Hello: I run a soccer club for girls in Los Angeles. I can see that you have more important topics to discuss but I thought I might drop you a notice about an event we are holding for a group of Colombian girls. If you are familiar with girls soccer in Colombia, you know that it is almost non-existent. We hope to plant the seed in these young girls so that they can see the value of sport in terms of education and as a vehicle to learning how to become a more productive person

<http://www.neptune.net/~scblues/inter.html>

Thank you, Larry Draluck Los Angeles, CA

21 June 1996

I was born in Bogota. I was graduated from the Javeriana University on October of the last year, and I got a diploma in Industrial Engineering. I am writing to this organization because I have realized that I have not done anything for my country, and it is time to start to fight for the peace process in Uraba. Your www page is wonderful, and it is very informative, please contact me in this direction in the internet.

-- John

24 June 1996

Hello! It's nice to hear that someone is concerned too about what is going on in Colombia. I'm now studying at Haverford College in PA and I wanted to get in contact with you. I will like to work with CSN and help out in some way. Here in the USA or in Bogota, where I'm from, I feel useless...Let me know,

-- Maria Pennsylvania

continued from page 2

And there is the staggering number of victims of the paramilitary advance. Currulao, Apartadó, Carepa and Chigorodó have been scenes of terrible massacres in recent months and have witnessed the ruthless advance of the ACCU forces. "The massacres are what garner the headlines and media coverage nationally and internationally. **But the vast majority of victims, and there have been well over two thousand in the last year or so, are simply buried in unmarked graves by family and friends too terrified to say anything to anyone.**"

Response of HR NGOs

National and international commissions have visited the region. Amnesty International and a contingent of Colombian human rights NGOs visited last year and a group from Pax Christi headed by the Bishop of Rotterdam ended a four day mission on March 10. And delegations from Germany and El Salvador are planning to follow suit later this year. Denunciations of paramilitary activities routinely fall on deaf ears here, though, and in a region as strategic economically and militarily as Urabá, this will almost surely continue to be the case.

Proposal for Neutral "Protection Zone"

Father Leonidas Moreno, who coordinates the Apartadó diocese's human rights work in Urabá says that although a peace accord in Urabá is clearly a "very remote possibility" at the moment, immediate measures must be taken to stop the slaughter of innocent victims of what promises to be a long drawn out conflict. "Specific agreements are more realistic possibilities now," he says, "something to at least protect the civilian population that has been displaced. The establishment of a neutral 'protection zone', for example, where all parties in the conflict agree to respect the civilian population and its right to neutrality." Who would sponsor and guarantee such a zone, though, in a region as volatile as Urabá remains an unanswered question.

Prognosis for Urabá

Almost no one expects the Urabá conflict to die down in the near future; most analysts fear the worst has yet to come. "There is simply too much at stake. The guerrillas have almost thirty

Colombia Human Rights Conference

October 25-27, 1996

New York City

The weekend of May 4 representatives from Madison, Chicago, New York, Boston, Washington DC, and Amherst met to plan the upcoming national conference of the Colombia Human Rights Network (CHRN).

Dates: Friday, Oct 25 noon thru Sunday, Oct 27 3 PM

Technical Workshops: Fundraising, Outreach, Media Access, Networking, Creating Media, US Role in Colombia, Women's Movement in Colombia, Peace Process, Economic Development, Faceless Justice/Rule of Law
Issues into Action Workshops:

Legislative Action, Community Links, Urgent Actions, Grassroots Support/FollowUp

Plenaries: on aspects of the current situation in Colombia (speakers include Zulia Mena, Afro-Colombian congresswoman from Choco); and on the identity and plans for the CHRN.

Interested in attending? Then mark your calendar now, and contact:

Colombia Multimedia Project
PO Box 1091 GPO
New York, NY 10116
212 802 7209 or 212 477 3143
gonzay@aol.com or mmcompa@igc.apc.org

years of presence here and the paramilitary force is probably the strongest and best equipped anywhere. **Arms, drugs, huge economic interests and, of course, the absolute indifference of the government, are simply too important to let humanitarian concerns get in the way.**

Upcoming Delegation to Colombia:

CSN will be organizing a delegation to Colombia in November 1996. If you are interested, please contact CSN immediately.

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S.J., executive director of Justicia Paz entitled "El Gobierno quiere matar tambien 'legalmente'" (The government also wants to kill "legally"). Believe it or not, there is no legal death penalty here.

The first edition also has important articles about the paramilitary strategy in Urabá, and the percentages of killings there ("Urabá has only 0.7% of the national population but yields 34% of the political murders") While this first version is available only in Spanish [D. Bland's article is reprinted here in AoC], future issues (4 per year) will be available in English and/or Spanish.

The English version will also include updates on actions by Colombia Human Rights activists in the States, as well as news updates from Colombia and form letters to send to Congress, the President, the State Department, etc. For your free magazine, please send me your regular mailing address and indicate whether you would like the magazine in English or Spanish (or both).

Please recall that the purpose of the free offer for activists is to try to reach folks in the US who are more likely to send in the form letters to Congress and the President etc, inform members of their respective groups and ask them to write letters as well, or otherwise become active in Colombian Human Rights issues. Thus, if you do not think you will be able to do any of the above, please consider making a donation to Justicia y Paz. We are trying to achieve the maximum activist effect on what are severely limited funds.

Suggested Donations:

\$25/year only the Mag.*

\$35/year Mag. and Bulletin**

*If you would like to make a smaller contribution, please do-- smartly used dollars can go a long way here.

** Bulletin is only available in Spanish-- but the numbers are in English.

Michael Lopez, Justicia y Paz,
A.A. 31861, Santafe de Bogota,
Colombia michael.lopez@lbbs.org

English-language Magazine on Human Rights in Colombia Due Out This Fall

Greetings:

My name is Michael Lopez. I am a Human rights lawyer from Rochester, New York working in Bogotá, Colombia for Justicia y Paz. JyP is probably the leading Human Rights group in Colombia struggling to bring some sort of justice for the victims of the approximately 10 political murders that occur per day.

I am writing to offer activists and activist organizations and other informed groups a free subscription to the new Justicia y Paz Magazine we have started. This year has started out especially violently, even for Colombia, with already 5 massacres in the regions of Urabá and Chocó. These regions border Panamá and the strategically important Darien Gap. It is no coincidence that one of the largest paramilitary groups runs free there often with open support from the US-backed military. Impunity in Colombia reaches the 100% level. For example, the perpetrators of the Trujillo massacre still run free.

We know that you all have your hands full struggling in the States, but there are little things even busy activists can do. The first step, as always, is to make yourself aware of the reality of Colombia. We must rid ourselves of the stereotype imposed on us of a nation of drug traffickers or of the existence of a Narco-guerrilla. To facilitate this first step, we at Justicia y Paz have started a new magazine about human rights issues in Colombia. This magazine is intended to accompany the "Anexo Informativo", a compilation of statistics on political violence issued every trimester by the Justicia y Paz Data Bank. Our first issue has an article about the debate to legalize the death penalty in Colombia by Javier Giraldo continued on page 7

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7/12/96

Visit CSN: virtually, at <http://www.igc.apc.org/csn/>, or at 29 E. Wilson St. in Madison!



Silvio Salazar Remembered

A memorial service for murdered Colombian community leader Silvio Salazar was held at Edgewood College April 19. Three dozen people attended this moving memorial, including several who had met him on their trips to Apartadó.

Silvio was a grassroots leader in Medellín, who organized people in the working class and poor neighborhoods against violence, providing productive environments for children and teenagers. A fund has been started to provide some assistance to his wife and two small children. Donations can be made out to "WICOLA-Silvio Fund".

CSN Thanks the Link Family

CSN would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Link Family in helping us establish our office at 29 East Wilson Street in downtown Madison. Lisa Link was a WILPF activist from Madison, constantly working for social justice, up to the moment of her passing. She was a very generous supporter of peace and justice in the 'Third World', and we honor her and her family in keeping the tradition alive.

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