

# ACTION ON COLOMBIA

Published by the Colombia Support Network  
P.O. Box 1505, Madison, WI 53701-1505  
csn@igc.org - www.colombiasupport.net

## Scorched Earth:

### U.S. Chemical Warfare in The Colombian Rainforest by Sean Donahue, photos by Linda Panetta



*Armed military helicopters such as this are used to escort fumigation planes in the Putumayo. CSN delegates got an aerial view of the fumigations from one of these choppers during the January delegation.*

*Note: Sean Donahue participated in the CSN fact-finding delegation to the Putumayo region in Southern Colombia from January 21-28. Some names have been changed for the protection of people in Colombia.*

**LA HORMIGA, COLOMBIA --**  
Manuel was working in his fields when the planes came, spraying "Roundup Ultra"

over his fields of corn, bananas, yucca, and plantain. He didn't have time to run for cover and in the weeks since he was sprayed. Manuel's vision has deteriorated and he has developed a strange rash on his back. All the plants in his field have dried up or turned yellow. The corn

was just ready for harvest when the planes came. The whole crop was ruined. The U.S. and Colombian governments claim that the planes spraying herbicides over southern Colombia are only targeting coca crops. But it is clear that there was never any coca in these fields.

*continued on page 5*

## French Human Rights Award Goes to CSN Colombian Partner Organization

In December, the French government recognized the Program for Development and Peace in the Magdalena Medio (PDPMM) through its annual Human Rights Award. Each year, the French government selects five organizations that exemplify the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to receive the honor.

*continued on page 2*



## Inside this Issue:

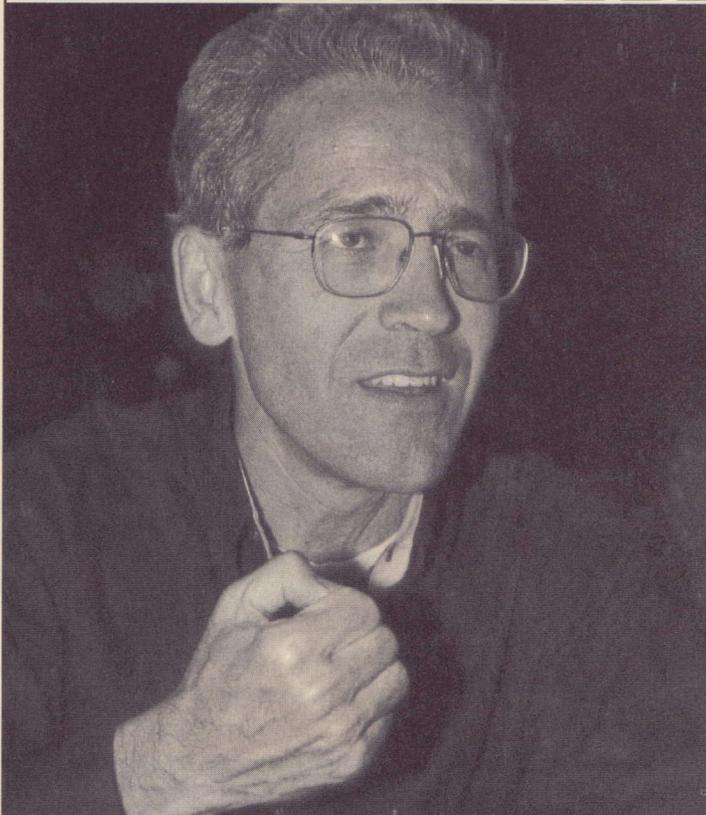
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### **Award, continued from page 1**

The PDPMM received the prize in recognition of its project entitled "Organization and Community Economic Development in Barrancabermeja," which for the past three years has developed several micro-enterprises in the city of Barrancabermeja, including community bakeries, potters, electricians, and carpentry. It also incorporates a women's project that focuses on city planning. All of the projects rely on the participation and input of community leaders and are based on the notion that community organization and self-sufficiency, rather than violence, is a way to justice and peace.

Colombia Support Network has worked with the PDPMM since its creation in 1996 to coordinate CSN sister community relationships in the Magdalena Medio region. We are honored to work with such an outstanding group of individuals and we congratulate all of those in the PDPMM whose labor has contributed to this well-deserved award.

*Fr. Francisco de Roux, Director of the Program for Development and Peace in the Middle Magdalena (PDPMM), the organization recognized by the French government for outstanding human rights work.  
(photo by Dick Bancroft)*



### **CSN in Action!**

## **A Look At Some of Our Recent Urgent Actions**

**\*Clinton Bypasses Human Rights**-Less than 48 hours before leaving office, President Clinton announced that he would ignore human rights stipulations in Plan Colombia, using a legal argument to say that they were no longer necessary. CSN condemned the President's actions and continues to encourage full accountability for U.S. actions in Colombia.

**\*San José de Apartadó**-The Peace Community continues to resist military/paramilitary aggression. Throughout the last few months, the Vejez and Bejarano Batallions of the 17th Brigade of the Colombian Army have erected road blocks to prevent residents from bringing food into the community. On January 6, 16-year-old Euquidio Vasquez lost an arm and a leg to a landmine in a community field recently occupied by the Army. On March 5, military and paramilitary personnel sacked the community, burned 10 houses to the ground, and threatened community leaders. The March 23 CSN delegation to San José de Apartadó is intended to support, protect, and encourage the community.

**\*Landazuri**-On December 9, paramilitaries entered the town of Landazuri, sister community to CSN-Montana. Approximately 15 members of the "Gonzalo de Jesus Perez" front of the AUC paramilitaries stalked the town under the leadership of a commander whose alias is "Kankil." The paramilitaries carried short-range weapons and rode through the town in a grey Toyota Explorer with Manizales state license plates. CSN-Montana and the national office flooded local officials with faxes and phone calls to demand an end to paramilitary intimidation. **In February, Katie Knight (CSN-MT) and Kate McCoy (National Office) visited Landazuri to gauge the current situation. Since the Urgent Action response of December 9-11, the paramilitaries have remained in Landazuri, but maintained a low-profile. Thus far, no one has been hurt or killed by the paramilitaries.**

**\*Barrancabermeja**-CSN participated in a month-long international solidarity campaign with the Organización Femenina Popular (OFP), a women's organization that is threatened by the paramilitaries. **CSN staffers and representatives attended solidarity meetings and provided accompaniment in Barranca in February and March. More pressure is needed, but to date none of the targeted leaders have been killed.**

### *A Celebration of Courage*

*This March, the community of San José de Apartadó (in Urabá, Northwestern Colombia) will celebrate its fourth anniversary as a Peace Community. On March 23, 1997, 1300 residents of the area signed a statement declaring themselves a "Comunidad de paz," meaning that they would maintain absolute neutrality in the face of all armed actors. In practical terms, this means that the civilian residents maintain complete autonomy, denying military, guerrilla, paramilitary or police presence in their community.*

*During his November 2000 visit to the U.S. for the School of the Americas protest in Ft. Benning, Georgia, Luís Eduardo Guerra of the Peace Community invited CSN to attend the anniversary celebration on March 23, 2001. Two CSN delegates will join other Colombian and international observers to demonstrate their support for the peace community at the anniversary celebration. The celebration comes at a time of increased military-paramilitary attacks on the community, including the arson of 10 houses on March 5.*

*While in Madison, Luís Eduardo emphasized that international attention "is a tremendous support for us, because it's saying to the State that the community is not alone. It makes us realize, too, that we have many friends in other parts of the world who are paying attention to what is happening, and it tells the State that it needs to account for its actions, not just to the national community, but also to the international community."*

*We are honored to join others from the international community in supporting this celebration of courage in the face of so much death and destruction.*



*Luís Eduardo Guerra of the Peace Community during his November 2000 visit to the U.S. Shown here with Dane County (WI) Executive Kathleen Falk.*

## COME ALONG!

There will be two CSN delegations to Colombia in the Summer of 2001. The first will be a fact-finding delegation to the Putumayo region in Southern Colombia from July 8-15. The second will be a sister community delegation to the Magdalena Medio region from July 22-29. Contact the CSN office for more information.

## Colombia Forum Draws 600

By Chip Mitchell

(Pulse, 2/14/01; Foreign Policy in Focus 2/16/01; Miami Herald 2/12/01)

Some 600 people gathered at a "town hall" forum February 11 in south Minneapolis to hear U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone describe his November trip to Colombia\*. The forum was the largest Minnesota gathering of any kind about Colombia ever. Wellstone criticized U.S. policy toward the country, including a \$1.3 billion package of mostly military aid that President Clinton signed last July.

Appearing at Wellstone's side was Luis Gilberto Murillo, an exiled former governor of the western Colombian province of Chocó. Murillo fled the country after his kidnapping by rightwing paramilitaries and death threats to his family. Noting that most Colombians, including 1.8 million displaced people, lack the option of exile, Murillo echoed Wellstone's condemnation of U.S. aid and of U.S.-sponsored spraying of pesticides on coca fields. The aid, he said, nearly has destroyed a fragile peace process and has increased violence. He asked everyone at the forum to work to change U.S. policy.

Wellstone condemned the aid for ignoring extensively documented ties between Colombia's military and paramilitaries.

Pam Costain\*, executive director of the Minneapolis-based Resource Center of the Americas, a forum co-sponsor, warned that the public needed to be on guard against efforts to extend Plan Colombia to Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela. She praised the large turnout: "This demonstrates that the public is becoming aware of the serious situation in Colombia."

*\*CSN helped brief Sen. Wellstone before and after his November trip to Colombia. Pam Costain, a member of the CSN Advisory Board, accompanied Sen. Wellstone on his trip.*

## Santo Domingo Hoy, Mañana, y Siempre by Dorothy Dvorachek

There's a ring that I wear on my finger now. A young woman took it off her finger and put it on mine when she was leaving from O'Hare after coming to testify about the injury she experienced in the massacre in Santo Domingo, Colombia. We thought we might never see each other again. She wanted me to remember her.

There was a moment when a Sister leaned over and told me that I should speak up if I wanted to go to Colombia with a delegation to bring the judgment from the International Tribunal of Opinion. I had to say something because after getting to know those who risked so much to tell their story, after their many requests to go see their country, my response was necessary.

Along with many months of meetings, organizing and work, these moments of intervention brought me to join the delegation, representing the Colombia Support Network, to bring the judgment from the Tribunal to Colombia from December 11-15, 2000. This meant 3 very full days of spreading the word through meetings with officials, a press conference and the incredible popular demonstration in Arauca, the state where Santo Domingo is.

### Months of Preparation

Here in Chicago, the delegation came  
**continued on page 6**



*The Anniversary of the massacre of Santo Domingo*

**Rainforest, continued from page 1**

Manuel is 74 years old and now that his crops have been destroyed he has nothing to eat and no way to make money. He rented the land he farmed and he can't pay back the money he owes. Holding a bunch of rotten bananas in his hand, he says, "I don't grow coca. Why did they do this to me?"

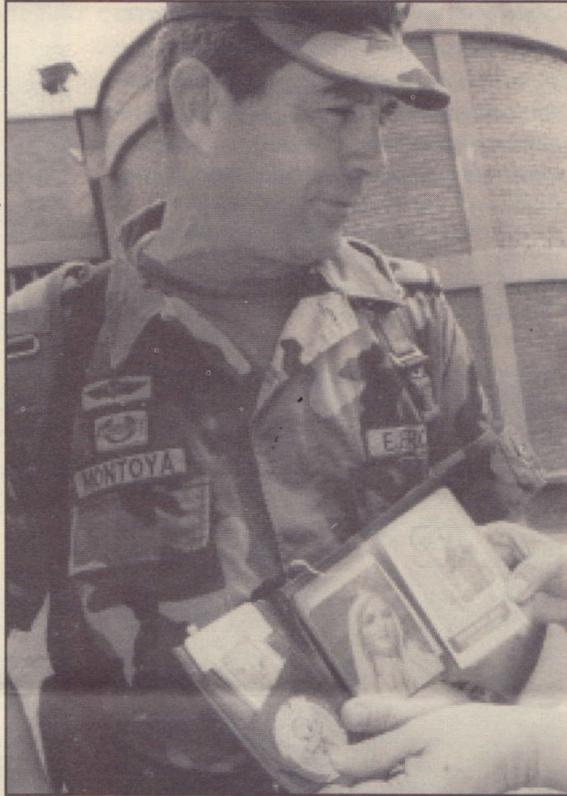
Ironically coca seems to be the only thing still growing in La Hormiga. Not far from Manuel's fields, our delegation of journalists and human rights activists from the U.S. finds a field of coca bushes. They have been damaged by the herbicides, but they are still growing and the coca crop is definitely salvageable. Nearby the trees and the grasses are dying. Monkeys scurry through the branches of desiccated trees searching for fruit.

The yucca cooperative was devastated by the fumigation too. Fifty farmers had banded together to form this small cooperative which gave the people of La Hormiga some small chance of moving out of the coca economy. But the yucca crop was destroyed.

Near the entrance of the cooperative, we meet Maria, a middle aged woman with four children who lost everything when she lost her crops. She hasn't eaten for days. She wants to try to get to the city to find some food for her children, but the right wing paramilitary group that controls the town stole and trashed her car. The paramilitaries have already killed five of her brothers. The police and the military offer no protection -- the soldiers at the local army base have lunch with

the paramilitaries every day.

At the army base, Gen. Mario Montoya, a former counterinsurgency instructor at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, GA who now commands



*Former SOA instructor General Montoya displays his religious icons for CSN delegates. Below: The 24th Brigade*

all the military forces in the Putumayo region, gives us a power point presentation about the military's war on drugs in southern Colombia. Each slide says "We are in a war . . . and we are winning." Gen. Montoya shows us that each year more and more coca is being eradicated. What he neglects to mention is that since the U.S. and Colombian governments started fumigating coca fields in 1992, the amount of land under coca cultivation in Colombia has tripled. His presentation bears an eerie resemblance to Pentagon briefings prior to the Tet Offensive that used body counts to explain how we were

winning the war in Vietnam.

Indigenous people have been hit particularly hard by the fumigations. A few weeks before our delegation visited Colombia, the Cofán reservation near the Ecuadorian border was fumigated. The Cofán weren't involved in commercial coca cultivation, but they did grow a small amount of coca for ritual use. Their food, medicinal, and ritual crops were all destroyed. The surrounding forest was killed too, and the dead leaves and branches had become fire hazards. The tribe had to sell all its cattle because the grasses in the pastures were killed by the herbicides. The streams that the tribe depended on for drinking water were all poisoned. People were developing strange digestive and respiratory problems. Many had fled to Ecuador. A few remained on the reservation. A representative of the tribe told us "Our elders are crying. They think that the Earth has been murdered." Fr. Pablo, who had surveyed the devastation said, "This is a disaster whose gravity will be felt by our children. They are the ones who will need the wood of the trees that were killed, the species that were lost, birds, butterflies, water creatures. Another grave consequence is the death of

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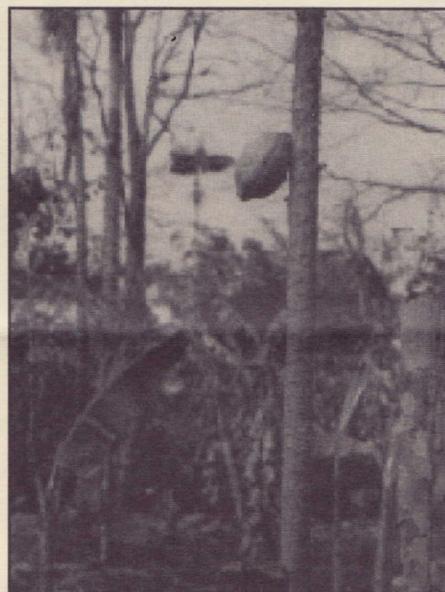
of the people's hope and this hurts the most."

Why was the Cofán reservation fumigated? Gonzalo de Francisco, National Security Advisor to Colombian President Andrés Pastrana suggested that the government was helping the Cofan retake their land from coca farmers who had invaded their territory. The Cofán clearly weren't looking for that kind of help. A local organizer involved in the fight against the fumigations

land sterile and uninhabitable could very well serve the interests of the oil companies.

There is not yet sufficient evidence to back up this theory, but it certainly fits the pattern of terror in Colombia; a pattern that we must work to reverse.

*Sean Donahue is Co-Director of NH Peace Action. To view the entire original article, please see [www.colombiawatch.org](http://www.colombiawatch.org). For more information on the correlation between oil exploration and violence in Colombia, contact the CSN office. To see more delegation photos by Linda Panetta, check out [www.soaw-ne.org](http://www.soaw-ne.org).*



*Food crops killed by fumigations in the Putumayo region.*

suggested another motive to us in hushed tones at the airport in Puerto Asis: There are oil reserves and mineral deposits underneath many of the indigenous reservations. Colombia's constitution prohibits forcing indigenous people off their land. But if the indigenous people were to leave their land voluntarily, corporations could come in and exploit the resources. Like the U'wa in the North, the Cofán have a long history of resisting oil exploration. Rendering their

#### ***Santo Domingo, continued from page 4***

from the dedication of many individuals, organizations and the legal team, who spent the last year building the case and organizing for the Tribunal of Public Opinion that was held last September 22 and 23.

In addition, the legal advisors and the 11 jurors spent from September to December sorting through the documentation and testimonies to produce the judgment and recommend actions

could bring them to Colombia. Before the delegation left, a moving vigil was held at the Lakeview Presbyterian Church on December 7, 2000. Complete with a "presente" litany of the children and adults killed in the massacre, the vigil was an opportunity for the Chicago community to gather in solidarity to send off the delegation.

The delegation itself was testimony to the depth of the process of the Tribunal. Because the treatment of the case had been prepared so carefully, the recommendations that we brought were based on research and proof that carried the weight of credibility. Furthermore, our message was impassioned by the horrific story of Santo Domingo that demanded that the lives of these children and adults not go unnoticed.

#### **Demanding Justice**

Once in Bogota, we headed to the U.S. Embassy, a well-guarded outpost that had the look and feel of commando central, where we met with Leslie Bassett, the Political and Economic representative. In a well-trained, rapid fire style, she assured us that the military had "evolved" since the massacre and that the US hoped to train the military courts to do a better job (rather than turning the cases over to an impartial civil court), all before attending to their "oil guys" who were also visiting the Embassy. After the

***continued on page 8***

# Our Voices

## Solidarity for Survival by Katie Knight

(Katie Knight attended two CSN delegations from January 21-February 11. Here she discusses her experiences in Barrancabermeja. To read her full account, please see [www.colombiasupport.net](http://www.colombiasupport.net) or contact our office.)



Women and children at a solidarity march on February 8 for the Organizacion Femenina Popular (OFP), which is targeted by the paramilitaries. Each banner represents an OFP chapter in Barrancabermeja.

Barrancabermeja is the most militarized place in the Western Hemisphere, and the most violent. While our delegation was there, the largest group of paramilitaries, the AUC, continued to commit terrible attacks, including a massacre, and they threatened the lives of those who are working to defend social, political and human rights.

The AUC has specifically targeted a house where 22 displaced families have taken refuge, which is run by the Organizacion Femenina Popular. In response to the threats, local, national, and international solidarity and peace organizations converged to cele-

brate unity, strategize protection, and demand government intervention. They have developed a month-long campaign of international solidarity from February 8 to March 8, 2001. It was an honor to participate in this process along with human rights

workers who put aside personal fears to resist the forces of violence and terrorism, to defend democracy and autonomy.

**Nunca Mas!  
Never Again!**

In December, Colombian human rights organizations presented the first three volumes of the Colombia: Nunca Mas report, which details crimes against humanity in each region of Colombia from 1966-1998. Volumes on the other 21 regions of Colombia, as well as an English edition, are forthcoming. The organizations that produced this historic document have faced serious obstacles, including the mili-

tary siege of a human rights office on May 13, 1998. Thanks in part to your response to a CSN urgent action, all of the collaborators who worked on the report remain unharmed.

## Back to the Future

Remember the Contras? The man who brought you the Central American death squads is back, now as George W. Bush's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, the top Latin American policy post in the U.S. government. **Otto Reich** was a key player in the Iran-Contra Affair and "engaged in prohibited, covert propaganda activities" during the Reagan Administration, according to a 1987 U.S. government investigation. CSN urges all those concerned with peace and justice in Latin America to contact their Senators and Representatives to oppose Mr. Reich's nomination.

*Below: The Nunca Mas report. Colombia: Never Again, Crimes Against Humanity*



### ***Santo Domingo, continued from page 6***

Embassy, we attended other meetings with an impressive array of Colombian officials including the National Prosecutor, the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Attorney General.

The final meeting of the day with the Attorney General was hopeful in that he pledged that he was planning to press charges against some of the military leaders involved, but as he was also planning to step down soon, we can not be sure whether these plans will pan out.

### **Solidarity with Survivors**

The highlight of the trip was the amazing memorial/political demonstration that the local social organizations arranged in Santo Domingo. As the crowd of more than 3,000 from all over the state of Arauca attested, this was a true human rights event. This mood was first set by a heart made in the center of the stadium with red chairs. In these chairs, the family members of the victims were seated. In the center of the heart were 18 white empty chairs with photos of the victims. In an unexpected turn of events, we were able to go down and meet these family members. In these meetings, especially with the husband of one of those killed, the grief

was still very strong. The entire crowd participated in the memorial. Each person was given a flower, and at the end each laid their flower on the chair of one of the victims. This 4-hour event was a remarkable expression of many feelings: of grief, hope, courage, perseverance and clear political commentary.

The delegation from

Colombia for many of us. The spirit of the delegation had been very meaningful, both through the message that we brought and the reception we were given, especially in Arauca.

We flew back into O'Hare the next day, full of three intense days of stories and the connections that we were now obliged to bring back



*Empty chairs for the victims of the Santo Domingo Massacre at the Solidarity event on December 13.*

to Chicago. We carried in our hearts the image of the heart of family members surrounding the 18 empty chairs. We brought back the privilege and duty of being more involved in the courage and pain of the the people of Arauca, who know the commitment and clarity that justice demands. We

Chicago responded to the brave testimonies by sharing its findings and recommendations as well as extending its support for the people there.

On the 3rd day, we completed our announcement of the judgment with a press conference for the general public. The organizers did a fine job, and news of the Tribunal delegation appeared in both the major national papers as well as national television.

### **Bringing the Message Home**

We were all very appreciative of those powerful days that had been our first visit to

brought back the spirit that looks beyond the limit of individual lives to proclaim:  
**SANTO DOMINGO TODAY, TOMORROW AND FOREVER, FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE AND FULL REPARATION.** For in our efforts to bring a "drop of justice" to the people of Santo Domingo, we had been given a taste of justice ourselves.

***Dorothy Dvorachek is a member of CSN-Chicago and a Catholic Worker. Photos by the author. For more information on the Tribunal, contact [csnchicago@accion.net](mailto:csnchicago@accion.net)***

## SISTER COMMUNITY UPDATE: BUILDING SOLIDARITY NORTH AND SOUTH

*Congratulations! It's a...*

**Five new sister community relationships were born in the last few months:**

Berkeley, California with Puerto Asis, Putumayo  
Grand Rapids, Michigan with Aguachica, Magdalena Medio  
Athens, Georgia with El Penon, Magdalena Medio  
New Orleans, Louisiana with Regidor, Magdalena Medio  
Akron, Ohio with Cimitarra, Magdalena Medio

*My, how you've grown...*

**Sister community relationships have deepened with recent delegations to Colombia:**

Syracuse, New York to Yondo, Magdalena Medio  
Madison, Wisconsin to San José de Apartadó, Urabá  
St. Louis, Missouri to Rio Viejo, Magdalena Medio

Montana to Landazuri, Magdalena Medio

Chicago, Illinois to Cacarica, Urabá

*And more are on the way....*



### **New Items Available**

**T-SHIRTS** with CSN's new logo, pictured above. M,L,XL \$15.

**Bumper Stickers** "If you liked Vietnam, You're Going to Love Colombia. Stop Plan Colombia!" \$2 each.

**Colombian Folk Music-CDs** from the Magdalena Medio, \$15

**The Palace of Justice**, by Ana Carrigan. A beautifully crafted book which unveils the truth about who makes decisions in Colombia and in whose interests. \$15 each.

### **NUNCA MAS REPORT**

Many individuals and organizations have asked us for copies of the Colombia: Nunca Mas report. Unfortunately, the report is not yet in English or posted on the web.

If you would like a copy, please contact our office. We will order copies of the report on an individual basis. Please note that the reports will be arriving from Colombia and delivery may take several weeks. Price will vary depending on the number of volumes ordered.

Look us up on the Web at  
[www.colombiasupport.net](http://www.colombiasupport.net)  
or e-mail [csn@igc.org](mailto:csn@igc.org)  
or call: (608) 257-8753  
fax: (608) 255-6621

### **The Colombia Support Network "Action on Colombia"**

#### **Editors**

Kate McCoy  
John Hickman

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Katie Knight  
Sean Donahue  
Chip Mitchell  
Dorothy Dvorachek  
Linda Panetta

The Colombia Support Network is a national peace and justice network of groups and individuals working to promote respect for human rights in Colombia and a just relationship between the United States and Colombia through grassroots activism. CSN supports a nonviolent, negotiated resolution to the conflict in Colombia.

**If you liked VIETNAM,  
You're going to love COLOMBIA!  
STOP PLAN COLOMBIA!**

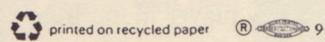


www.colombiasupport.net  
(608) 257-8753  
P.O. Box 126, Leland, WI 53021-1266

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## YOU CAN HELP!!

### GET INVOLVED: END THE HORRIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN COLOMBIA

- I would like to become a member of CSN  
WICOLA/CSN membership donation \$\_\_\_\_\_ (\$25 regular, \$15 low income)
- I am sending a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_
- Send items: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$\_\_\_\_\_ each and \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$\_\_\_\_\_ each. Total: \_\_\_\_\_
- Check enclosed     MasterCard     VISA
- Account number \_\_\_\_\_
- Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_      Name \_\_\_\_\_

- I am interested in volunteering:**
- \_\_\_ starting a CSN chapter in my city
  - \_\_\_ going on a delegation to Colombia
  - \_\_\_ translating / interpreting
  - \_\_\_ setting up a talk at my school, group, or church
  - \_\_\_ participating in CSN working groups

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