

November 20, 2008

Congresswoman
NANCY PELOSI
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The network of Colombian organizations that have signed this letter would like to express our thanks and recognition of your concern for and interest in Colombia, in particular in relation to human rights, as expressed by your decision to postpone indefinitely the debate in the US Congress around the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Due to the fact that the administration of President Bush has renewed its proposal that the US Congress signs the FTA between Colombia and the United States of America, we would like to take this opportunity to share with you the deplorable humanitarian situation that exists in Colombia today and urge you to oppose any further attempts to approve the FTA and to reconsider the funding of Plan Colombia.

Despite the insistence by the Uribe government that the human rights situation has improved in Colombia, the facts, including official ones, reflect quite a different reality.

The recent case of extrajudicial executions of civilians is particularly troubling. In Colombia these civilian victims are often young men taken from poor neighborhoods to another region of the country, executed by Colombian army officers and then dressed up as guerrillas and presented as if they were combat deaths, to show that there is progress being made in the war against the FARC rebels and "terrorism".

Meanwhile, in 2008 alone, forty-one trade unionists have been killed. Last year, thirty-nine were killed more than all the countries in the world combined. The Uribe government has also engaged in repression against indigenous communities: 1,240 indigenous have been killed in the six years since President Uribe has been in office.

Contrary to the image projected by President Uribe and his government, it's not just FARC guerrillas and right wing paramilitaries who are heavily involved in serious crimes. It's the Colombian state apparatus itself. Please see the attached document for a more complete presentation of the current situation in Colombia.

Like so many people around the world, we are filled with hope that the historic victory of Barack Obama on November 4 will bring real change in areas of fundamental, mutual concern. We cordially ask you, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to continue your opposition to the Colombia Free Trade Agreement and to consider defunding Plan Colombia.

Sincerely,

*RECALCA -- Colombian Action Network in Response to Free Trade and FTAA
CCEEU Coalition Colombia-Europe-United States
Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy, and Development
ALLIANCE OF SOCIAL AND LIKE-MINDED ORGANIZATIONS
PERMANENT CIVIL SOCIETY ASSEMBLY FOR PEACE*

