

The humanitarian situations in Colombia worsened between 2007 and 2008; there has been an increase in massacres by 5%, murders of mayors and former mayors by 200%, assassinations of members of indigenous communities by 18%, of teachers not affiliated with trade unions by 67%, of teachers affiliated with trade unions by 15% and of trade unionists from other sectors by 117%.<sup>1</sup>

The indigenous population has been particularly affected. Between 1 December 2002 indigenous communities have registered the death of 212 of their members by paramilitaries (187 were men and 25 women), 22 cases of forced disappearances (18 men and 4 women), 29 cases of torture (25 men and 4 women), 90 kidnappings (86 men, 3 women, and 1 child), and 24 collective threats against their communities by such groups, which the Government claims to have demobilized successfully. The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia warned that of the 80 indigenous communities in Colombia, 18 are at the point of extinction<sup>2</sup>.

After Sudan, Colombia is the country with the greatest number of displaced people in the world.<sup>3</sup> Between January and march/2008 113.473 people were displaced, it was an 18% increase in forced displacement, in respect to the same period of the last year. Daily, 1.250 people have been displaced. Afrocolombian and indigenous people are the most affected for this situation.

Annually 15,000 members of the indigenous communities are registered as displaced people (this year alone 2117 indigenous people have been displaced) and the Afro-Colombian community makes up 20% of the total displaced population of Colombia.<sup>4</sup>

In Latin America, Colombia is the country with the highest number of refugees; according to the UNHCR 552,000 Colombians are looking for refuge. Colombia also has the fourth highest number of people seeking asylum in the world, after Iraq, Somalia and Eritrea.

Extra-judicial executions have increased by a disturbing amount. According to the latest report by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, "the right to life has been seen to be affected by the persistence of homicides which show the characteristics of extra-judicial executions attributed to members of the armed forces, in particular the Army. This has been observed by the office in Colombia through an increase in the number of complaints in 2005. These cases were registered in 21 departments, in particular in Antioquia, Nariño, Valle, Putumayo, Cesar, Atlántico, Tolima and Guajira. In many of the reported cases, three common elements were identified: the appearance of the civil victims as murdered in combat, alterations made to the scene of the crime by the offenders and the investigation of the facts by the military penal justice". During the last five years, an increase of 67.71% has been registered in extrajudicial executions directly attributed to State security forces, between Januar/2007

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Presidential Program of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Vice President of the Republic: [http://www.derechoshumanos.gov.co/observatorio\\_de\\_DDHH/observatorio\\_ddh.asp](http://www.derechoshumanos.gov.co/observatorio_de_DDHH/observatorio_ddh.asp)

<sup>2</sup> Report for the Universal Periodic Review on Colombia. July 2008

<sup>3</sup> Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Sept 2007. UNHCR

<sup>4</sup> The indigenous population of Colombia is being devastated by forced displacement. News from the UNHCR, 8 August 2008

and december/2008, 535 people were extrajudicially executed<sup>5</sup> The Attorney General of the Nation revealed that 887 extrajudicial executions have taken place through the duration of Uribe's Government, a figure higher than the assassinations committed by dictator Pinochet of Chile, according the director of Human Rights Watch

During the last five years, extrajudicial executions have increased by 65.51%.<sup>6</sup> The Attorney General of the Nation revealed that 887 extrajudicial executions have taken place through the duration of Uribe's Government, a figure higher than the assassinations committed by dictator Pinochet of Chile, according the director of Human Rights Watch.

With respect to the violations of women's rights, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights revealed that it has "received a number of complaints about female victims of violent sexual acts, which were attributed as much to members of the armed forces as to armed vigilantes.<sup>7</sup>

Along with the humanitarian crisis, Colombia is facing an increased level of general poverty by 45.10% and of rural poverty by 62.08%. Abstract poverty affects 21.5% of the population<sup>8</sup>. Although significant levels of economic growth have been registered in the past few years, this has not resulted in a reduction of inequity, poverty and unemployment. Colombia has the second highest rate of inequity in Latin America, with a Gini coefficient of 0.576. According to the 2005 census, average life expectancy for the general population is 76 years. For Afro-Colombians, it is 66.7 years for women and 64.6 for men. According to the latest official data (1993), indigenous women had a life expectancy 15 years less than the national average and men 9 years below average<sup>9</sup>.

The paramilitary groups that call themselves the "New Generation" and Black Eagles" have threatened various national and international NGOs, in addition to socialist leaders, indigenous organizations, UK agencies, embassies and cooperation programs that aid victims. President Alvaro Uribe has instigated intolerance and violence against political opposition and any critical analysis of his Government. For example, in the report "Losing Control? The Obstacles to the investigations of the paramilitary mafia in Colombia" by Human Rights Watch, President Uribe declared that the director of this organization in Latin America, José Manuel Vivanco, was an "accomplice of the FARC".

The current Government has maintained a policy of persecuting, stigmatizing, eliminating and impeding the trade unionist movement. In the face of strikes by workers of the judicial branch, the government declared "The State of Interior Commotion" (article \_\_\_ CN), that allowed decrees to be issued that enabled employers to fire employees using their right to strike.

The Government employed the same response to the strike organized by the cane cutters. They have been on strike for over 53 days, to request that the national

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<sup>5</sup> Extrajudicial executions Report: Observatorio de derechos Humanos y diH de la CCEEU, Corporación Jurídica Libertad, Ccajar, CCJ, Cos-pacc, Humanidad Vigente, Minga, Banco de Datos del Cinep, Comité de Derechos Humanos del Bajo Arari, Sembrar, Comité de Solidaridad con los Presos Políticos, Fundación Dos Mundos, Reiniciar, Paz con Dignidad Colombia, Redher, Corporación Yira Castro, Justapaz y la Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz. Partner organization: Peace Brigades International

<sup>6</sup> Extrajudicial executions in Colombia have increased by more than 65% in five years. El Mundo, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007

<sup>7</sup> Report by United Nations [Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights](#) about human rights in Colombia, 2006/7, A/HRC/4/48.81

<sup>8</sup> Poverty Mission: Ongoing poll of households. II Trimester of households

<sup>9</sup> Report for the Universal Periodic Review on Colombia. July 2008

Government and the factory owners allows them to be contracted directly by and recognized by the respective factories where they work, rather than through the Work Association Cooperative, as is currently the case. The Government has labeled these workers as terrorists and ordered the capture of several leaders.

Following the visit of the Human Rights Observation to Colombia, in which representatives of the Government and Human Rights Organizations met, the United Nations [Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights](#) expressed its concern for the serious challenges this country is facing in regard to arbitrary and groundless detentions; extrajudicial executions; the inefficiency of the Law of Justice and Peace and the insufficient compensation for victims; the vulnerability of Human Rights Defenders, trade unionists, journalists and public sector workers; and the grave mistreatment and displacement of women, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.<sup>10</sup>

The statistics we have provided show that democracy in Colombia faces serious problems. This is due to the Colombian Government's failure to fulfill its international commitments to improve its human rights record. International trade and cooperation should not reinforce this situation. We therefore ask the Democratic Party of the United States to analyze and revise initiatives such as Plan Colombia and the FTA, which will negatively affect the people of Colombia.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: : <http://www.nacionesunidas.org.co/index.shtml?apc=i1-----&s=n&x=56061>