

Report

4

COLOMBIAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES DOCUMENT THEIR SUFFERING AND THEIR HOPE

A PROPHETIC CALL



JUSTAPAZ AND THE PEACE COMMISSION OF THE EVANGELICAL COUNCIL OF COLOMBIA, CEDECOL
DOCUMENTATION AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM

A PROPHETIC CALL, EDITION 4

COLOMBIAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES DOCUMENT THEIR SUFFERING AND THEIR HOPE

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Peace Commission

Caribbean Coast Region • Western Region • Antioquia-Chocó Region
Tolima-Huila-Caquetá Region • Central Region

**A PROPHETIC CALL, EDITION 4:
COLOMBIAN PROTESTANT CHURCHES DOCUMENT THEIR SUFFERING AND THEIR HOPE**

A publication of the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Non Violent Action –JUSTAPAZ– And the Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia, CEDECOL

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INTRODUCTION

The Documentation and Advocacy Program is a joint project of Justapaz¹ and the Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Colombia (CEDECOL).²

Documentation methodology

The information on political violence provided through *Prophetic Call* reports is based on field-work carried out by trained regional coordinators and team members. They collect testimony from primary sources through interviews with victims, their family members, pastors and church leaders. The report reflects a clear bias for the victims' version of events.

The document represents a careful, limited registry that reflects only part of the suffering of Colombian Protestant and Evangelical churches (hereafter referred to only as "churches"), much less of the population at large. Limited resources impede coverage of the whole country and inhibit the documenters' ability to respond to all

1 Justapaz is the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action, a ministry of the Colombian Mennonite Church.

2 The Colombian Evangelical Council, or CEDECOL, is a federation representing approximately 70% of Colombia's Evangelical and Protestant Christian population. The Restoration, Life and Peace Commission is also known as the Peace Commission.

requests. Thus, the reported cases are concentrated in the geographic regions where trained staff members were able to do their work of listening and documenting.

At the request of the surviving victims and family members, many of the names appearing in this document have been changed with the intention of protecting identity. An asterisk (*) indicates a fictitious name. Real names are published with the consent and accepted responsibility of the victims and their families.

Reporting protocol

The information on political violence in this report is presented in ways that are consistent with human rights and International Humanitarian Law norms to ensure clear communication nationally and internationally. Justapaz and the Peace Commission use the public domain Online Political Violence Information System, *Sivel*, to organize data and generate reports and tallies. For classification purposes, the program adopted and modified the Theoretical Framework of CINEP's³ Political Violence Database.

Additional information on training received by program participants, documentation methodology and classification and reporting protocol are available at www.justapaz.org.

Special thanks

We are grateful to Ricardo Esquivia who, during his time as Coordinator of the Peace Commission of CEDECOL, participated actively in this project. It would not be what it is today without him. We look forward to his continued accompaniment and mentorship.

3 *Theoretical Framework of the Database on Political Violence, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Center for Investigation and Popular Education, CINEP.*



Home of the Martínez Medina family. (See page 19)



The Bogotá Internal Displacement Working Group, Mencoldes

Executive Summary

A Prophetic Call: Colombian Protestant Churches Document Their Suffering and Their Hope

A report on political violence against Colombian Protestant and Evangelical churches and their peace-building witness.

In 2008, Justapaz⁴ and the Peace Commission of CEDECOL⁵ documented political violence revealing 240 individual violations suffered by 158 individual church victims. In addition, trained program members recorded 31 collective violations against communities during that period. The sum of individual and collective violations resulted in a total of 2,285 victims.

For the third consecutive year, Colombian churches attributed more violations to the paramilitaries than to the guerrillas or Public Security Forces. Paramilitaries allegedly committed 120 individual violations against

4 Justapaz is the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action, a ministry of the Colombian Mennonite Church.

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church victims, versus the 97 committed by the guerrilla groups, and 10 by the State.⁶ Through personal interviews with surviving victims, family, and community members, we registered death threats (115), displacements (81), and homicides (22) as the most frequently occurring violations.

The 2008 assassination of Pastor Justo Tunabalá and the disappearance of Pastor William Reyes illustrate the violence suffered by victims, as well as the difficulty in seeking justice in such cases. The Colombian army does not deny assassinating Pastor Justo Tunabalá; rather, he is falsely accused of being a guerrilla. His family was later intimidated by the Army. The persons responsible for Pastor William Reyes' disappearance are still unknown and no progress has been reported in investigations into the crime, despite energetic international political advocacy.

Collective displacements (10) of church communities further hint at the nearly invisible humanitarian crisis suffered by these victims of the armed conflict. Colombia tragically boasts the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the western hemisphere, second only to Sudan in the world.

This brief summary illustrates that the Colombian government's repeated mantra of "FARC as public enemy number one" is an oversimplification of Colombia's protracted armed conflict. Many Colombians and international onlookers may be convinced by the government's simplified version of events, but life stories shared by Evangelical and Protestant church members expose a much more complex on-going armed conflict.

By being justice and peace, church communities condemn violence and invite participation in genuine alternatives. Their sacred yes – spoken through truth-telling and loving practices – provides signposts to a non-violent, just solution to social inequalities and armed conflict. Churches are saying yes to the truth of personal narratives of persecuted victims that is denied by the government. Yes to justice that strives to make all things new. Yes to dialogue between warring parties instead of speaking only through the exchange of bullets.

Peacemaking churches that embody alternatives to war and take risks for reconciliation will show Colombia a way out of prolonged violent conflict.

6

In 13 cases there was no attribution.

The lasting solution to Colombia's internal conflict must be as nuanced, deliberate and protracted as the conflict itself. Based on local faith community experiences and the factors that cause and permit violence to continue, churches request specific changes in the practices and policies of Colombia, the United States, Canada and the European Union. They also speak directly to the armed groups, legal and illegal, carrying out the violence to encourage negotiated solutions to the armed conflicts that make up the great conflict tormenting Colombia's churches and people at this time.



The Bogotá Internal Displacement Working Group, Mencoldes



Chapter 1.

READING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES: 2008 Context Analysis

² Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices. . . ¹² In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbors by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord. Ezekiel 22: 2, 12, NIV

A reading from Colombia

With the Bible on his lap, a faith community leader stared at the verse. “This is our reality,” he stated soberly. Documented cases corroborate the phenomena he named: members of the Public Security Forces received rewards when they executed civilians presented as guerrillas killed in combat. Paramilitary and guerrilla took the lives of youth, men and women who refused to join their ranks. Community leaders who resisted violent coercion were killed. President Álvaro Uribe’s reelection was won through bribes and corruption. The government denied the paramilitary exist, and yet self-defined paramilitary continued perpetrating violence for political and economic interests.

Fabricated truths and hollow appeals to noble intentions composed a narrative of lies. The armed groups, legal and illegal, and the political and military establishment battled within a perverse logic justifying death-dealing policies and practices. Many Colombians and international onlookers were persuaded by the government's discourse, but life stories shared by Evangelical and Protestant church members and the truth embodied by peacemaking communities exposed falsehood. By *being* justice and peace, communities condemned the lies and invited participation in alternatives. Their sacred yes—spoken through truth-telling and virtuous practices—was emboldened by claiming the resurrection.

Practices and policies of violence compose a narrative of lies

The problem with keeping it simple: it's not. Government discourse, newspaper headlines, and the popular anti-FARC marches⁷ in 2008 led many Colombians and international onlookers to conclude that the FARC is Colombia's only problem. This issue was further whittled down to FARC kidnapping.⁸ The Administration announced the end of the paramilitary in an attempt to hide this on-going problem.

Life stories recorded in 2008 detail a more complex picture.

Kidnapping is an indisputably serious violation committed by the guerrilla. Nonetheless, churches did not report any kidnappings by the FARC in 2008. We did, however, register two victims of kidnapping allegedly taken by the paramilitary who managed to escape (Case 32) and one temporary (two day) detention of a pastor by the FARC (Case 31). Colombia's sociopolitical violence is multi-faceted and perpetrated by an array of groups.

7 Millions of people in over one hundred cities participated in the February 4 march against the FARC.

8 The Administration maintains that only 125 people are currently held, while a non-governmental organization tracking kidnappings contends that 566 are kidnapped by the FARC and ELN at present 'País Libre Duda del Número de Secuestrados Anunciado por Fondelibertad,' *Semana*, 18 abr. 2009, viewed on 27 abr. 09, <http://www.semana.com/noticias-conflicto-armado/pais-libre-duda-del-numero-secuestrados-anunciado-fondelibertad/122945.aspx> The numbers debate is highly political as they are considered a litmus test of the Uribe Administration's Democratic Security Policy success.

The paramilitary, guerrilla groups and Public Security Forces perpetrated multiple forms of violence. Between January 1 and December 31 of 2008 we registered 74⁹ cases describing 240 individual violations suffered by 158 individual victims.¹⁰ We also recorded 31 collective violations against communities during that period for a total of 2,285 victims. (See Chapter 3)

For the third consecutive year, Colombian churches attributed more violations to the paramilitaries than to the guerrillas. Paramilitaries allegedly committed 120 individual aggressions against church victims, versus the 97 committed by the guerrilla groups, and 10 by the State. Through personal interviews with surviving victims, family, and community members, we registered death threats (115), displacements (81), and homicides (22) as the most frequently occurring violations.

Collective displacements (10) of church communities in 2008 hinted at the invisible humanitarian crisis suffered by victims of the armed conflict. Collective victims (approximately 1,825) and individual victims (81) totaled 1,906 church people forced from their homes in 2008 alone.¹¹ The Colombian non-governmental organization CODHES registered 380,863 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2008 and 4,628,882 between 1985 and 2008.¹² Colombia has the highest number of IDPs in the western hemisphere, second only to Sudan in the world.¹³

9 Fewer cases are included in the 2008 analysis than in previous years due to an earlier closing date for case reception to achieve a mid-year publication of this document.

10 An individual victim refers to a single person. Collective victims refer to communities that together suffered the effects of armed conflict. The number of individual affected is an estimate. See page 77 for additional information.

11 In addition to documented cases such as no. 29, churches in southern Chocó helped attend to the 1,862 reported persons (not included in our statistics) who were forcibly displaced from rural areas of their province. Previous displacements occurred further north, in the Atrato region. A pastor attributes the displacement to combat between the paramilitary and guerrilla battling for control of coca-growing territory. (See Seed of Hope in LP2, "Food Not Coca")

12 'Al menos 380863 personas fueron desplazadas el año pasado según CODHES,' *El Tiempo*, 22 abr. 2009, viewed 23 abr. 2009, http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/politica/al-menos-380863-personas-fueron-desplazadas-el-ano-pasado-en-el-pais-segun-codhes_5038687-1 The same article reports the government estimate of 2,923,500 IDPs.

13 According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre; Sudan, at the end of 2008, registered 4.9 million IDPs and Colombia, as of September 2008, registered 4.3 million. *Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Development in 2008*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council. December 2008. Geneva, Switzerland.

Organized crime now combines with political aims and economic interests as a principle catalyst of violence with a corrupting influence on illegal armed groups and government institutions, weakening the rule of law.

The ends justify the means

The Public Security Forces, paramilitary and guerrilla groups all justified deadly, self-aggrandizing actions by appealing to a universal good they claim to ultimately serve. The State is an example to society, and society reflects the values modeled by its authority figures. For that reason we draw special attention to State actors and the message sent: values are negotiable in pursuit of particular interests and elimination of the perceived enemy.

This glimpse illustrates that the sound bite of “FARC—public enemy number one” is an oversimplification of Colombia’s protracted armed conflict.

Fabricating facts at any price: extrajudicial executions and political establishment fraud. The year 2008 revealed the degradation of the social and political armed conflict through military and political establishment fraud. The government and State armed forces provided payments and rewards for the fabrication of false truth. From Bogotá’s halls of power to the countryside turned battlefield, the government took shortcuts in the name of saving the country.

Extrajudicial executions: four church victims in 2008.¹⁴ “If no one speaks out, the violence is going to continue. Someone has to give voice to what is hidden. May the anger and grief produced by this absurd death serve to stop the killing.” Pastor Reinel Martinez of the Ebenezer Evangelical Community church in Cesar, Colombia. The brother of the late José Ulises Martinez Medina (Case 20, *Prophetic Call 3 (LP3)*) explained why he was speaking out while he was preparing for an October 2008 press conference on extrajudicial executions.

14 In the documentation of homicides we have adopted the convention used by other documentation centers of referring to homicides committed by the State as extrajudicial executions or executions and to homicides by non-State actors as murders or assassinations. This distinction attempts to recognize the legal and judicial framework that regulates the action of the State, but it in no way intends to give more or less significance to one death or another. All destroy human life and we condemn them equally.



Jose Ulises Martinez Medina receives his certificate from his church's leadership training program on August 2, 2007. He was executed one month later. (Case 20, *A Prophetic Call*, 3)

State forces executed a pastor and three other church members and presented them as members of illegal groups killed in combat in 2008.¹⁵

Members of the Colombian Army executed:

- Indigenous Pastor and cheese vendor Justo Tunubalá from Cauca on his way home from accompanying a church member to their house. The family was later intimidated by the Army (Case 11).
- Farmer from Tolima on his way to market with his avocado harvest. A week later he was turned in as a guerilla (Case 3).



Pastor Justo Tumbalá, far left, was executed by the Colombian Army on September 17, 2008 (Case 11).

15 We also registered death threats suffered by pastors. (See page 33)

- Two indigenous youth from Cauca, members of their church's worship team, while at a friend's home (Case 5).

Churches reported two extrajudicial executions in 2007 and two in 2006 as well. In recent years some civilians killed by Public Security Forces have been presented in guerrilla fatigues with a weapon. Because the apparent enemy death is actually a farce, these assassinations are commonly referred to as "false positives" in Colombia.

In September eleven young men who disappeared from Soacha, an impoverished area of southern Bogotá, were presented in Ocaña, 610 kilometers to the east, as guerrillas killed in combat. This opened Pandora's box to reveal the national phenomenon. Non-governmental organizations and State agencies alike reported a sharp rise in extrajudicial executions corresponding with the implementation of the current administration's Democratic Security Policy.

A coalition of non-governmental organizations and churches found that between July 2002 and December 2007, at least 1,122 cases of extrajudicial executions directly attributed to the State were registered. This stands in contrast to the 669 cases registered between January of 1997 and June of 2002. The organizations conclude that the Democratic Security Policy is related to this 67% increase.¹⁶ Investigations of extrajudicial executions by the Fiscalía (Attorney General's office) and Procuraduría (Prosecutor General's office) increased dramatically in recent years: 246 in 2004, 458 in 2005, 795 in 2006, and 911 in 2007.¹⁷ The abovementioned coalition registered 535 cases of impoverished young men and women classified as insurgents and killed by the Public Security Forces between January 2007 and June 2008.¹⁸ In December 2008, the Attorney General's office reported that 952 army members were connected to investigations.¹⁹

16 Observatorio de derechos humanos y derecho humanitario- Coordinación Colombia, Europa Estados Unidos. 'Ejecuciones Extrajudiciales: Realidad Inocultable.' p 2.

17 'Colombia's Human Rights Challenge,' *Semana*, 1 Ab. 2009, http://www.semana.com/wf_ImprimirArticulo.aspx?Id Art=117351

18 Op. cit.

19 'En alza investigaciones por ejecuciones extrajudiciales,' *elespectador.com*, 4 Dec. 2008, <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/articulo96318-alza-investigaciones-ejecuciones-extrajudiciales>

Past reports described the following interrelated motives for extrajudicial killings: a *method to inflate the body count* in response to pressure from President Uribe to produce results in the war on terror; *military strategy* to dispose of witnesses and perceived counterinsurgency targets that also wins favor with superiors in this counterinsurgency war.

Testimony from soldiers who have carried out the executions²⁰ and a 2005 Directive from the Ministry of Defense name an explicit motive for soldiers: time off and “payment of rewards for the capture, killing in combat of leaders of illegal armed organizations.”²¹ According to former Army soldiers and the Ministry of Defense Directive, the list of monetary value placed on specific results included rewards for members of the guerrilla that carried out or assisted with “terrorist actions” on a local level,²² thus providing incentive to kill civilians and turn them in as low-level guerrilla soldiers.

Colombian President Uribe took the positive step of dismissing 27 army officials implicated in the Soacha scandal. But even identifying who is giving the orders will not curb the trend. The cases in the news were not aberrations, but rather the result of a policy²³ and political culture. Relocating public officials and military personnel within the political and military establishment²⁴ provided an immediately effective public relations

20 See public testimonies of former soldiers who received rewards to carryout executions: ‘Nos daban cinco días de descanso por cada muerto.’ *Semana*, 26 Jan, 2008, viewed on 25 mar. 2009, http://www.semana.com/wf_InfoArticulo.aspx?IdArt=109046 20, ab, 2009.

21 Ministry of Defense. Directive 029 Copia No 12 de 16, 17 Nov. 2005. “Finalidad: Definir una política ministerial que desarrolle criterios claros y definidos para el pago de recompensas por la captura o abitamiento en combate de cabecillas de las organizaciones armadas al margen de la ley, material de Guerra, intendencia o comunicaciones e información sobre actividades relacionadas con el narcotráfico y pago de información que sirva de fundamento para la continuación de labores de inteligencia y el posterior planeamiento de operaciones.” (This document was provided by an anonymous source, and since it is classified as secret we cannot verify its authenticity. However, as noted, testimony of former soldiers corroborates the existence of a rewards system.)

22 Ibid. “HASTA 10 SMLV (3.815.000.00) Cabecillas y miembros de guerrillas, escuadras o rasos responsables materiales de desarrollar y/o apoyar a nivel local acciones terroristas, secuestros, extorsiones, abigeato, actividades de inteligencia, emboscadas, hostigamientos, asalto a poblaciones, ataques a instalaciones militares.”

23 See above information on 2005 Directives from the Ministry of Defense regarding payment for capture, killing, and delivery of information for intelligence.

24 General Montoya resigned because of pressure surrounding the false positive scandal and was subsequently punished by becoming an Ambassador. Others were fired and have damaged military careers.

strategy, but the results will not change until the orientation and strategy fundamentally change. When the political culture affirms progress through killing, death will be the result.

Evidence notwithstanding, the Administration made regular statements decrying accusations as legal maneuvers by the guerrilla to “paralyze the action of the armed forces against the terrorists,” as President Uribe stated in an early 2009 press conference.²⁵

Uribe’s Presidential reelection in question. The Colombian Supreme Court found former Congresswoman Yidis Medina guilty of accepting bribes to cast a decisive vote in favor of the reelection. She was sentenced to 48 months in jail and approximately 10,000 dollars in fines.²⁶ Through the “Yidis Politics” scandal Colombians learned that Colombian President Uribe had secured his unprecedented reelection, which required a constitutional change, through corruption.

Although the Supreme Court demonstrated the illegitimacy of Uribe’s reelection through the guilty verdict in the Yidis Medina case, the Constitutional Court refused to revisit its 2005 ruling (based on the Congressional vote), which paved the way for the 2006 reelection. Referring to his own court’s intransigence a Constitutional Court Magistrate stated, “this court killed the rule of law.”²⁷

The State became a model for corruption and lies for the rest of society. The message was clear: anything goes in pursuit of a goal.

Ongoing paramilitary corruption in politics (“parapolitics”). Investigations and indictments revealed ongoing collusion, as reported in previous editions of *A Prophetic Call*, between elected and appointed officials and

25 Alvaro Uribe Velez, ‘Declaration and Press Conference of President Uribe Velez, at the end of the Security Council in Tibú (Norte de Santander)’ Colombia President of the Republic, 23 mar. 2009, viewed 25 mar. 2009, http://web.presidencia.gov.co/sp/2009/marzo/23/02232009_i.html

26 “Forty-eight minimum salaries” was the ruling.

27 E.T. Movice, “German R. lamenta decisión de la Corte Cons. de tumbar proyecto de ley de los Provisionales” Movimiento de Victims, 23, Sept.2008, http://www.movimientodevictimas.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=75&Itemid=57 23, apr. 2009.

the paramilitary, known as the parapolitics scandal. More than 35% of members of Congress²⁸ are currently implicated and former high-level Executive branch officials are under arrest (for example, the Administrative Security Department Director). But this should come as no surprise for Colombian society given former paramilitary Mancuso's March 2002 declaration: "We can affirm, with proof in hand, that the original goal of 35% [control of Congress] has been squarely achieved."²⁹

The May 2008 extradition of 14 top paramilitary leaders to the U.S. served to hide the truths these demobilized paramilitary had begun to reveal. Their surprise extradition on drug charges brought new and difficult challenges in prosecuting them for war crimes connected to hundreds of thousands of Colombian victims. The confessions implicated high-level officials in paramilitary operations as well as political and economic dealings; the revealed complexities were highly inconvenient for the Colombian government.

The ends justify the means—beyond the establishment fray to easy money economics. Powerful figures outside Colombia's establishment also flaunted anti-Kingdom values prioritizing self-interests above all else.

Drug trafficking. Colombia continued to be the number one exporter of cocaine in the world. This unparalleled force audaciously parading wealth and power reinforced the notion that pursuit of self-interests render natural and national law irrelevant.

The 2008 get rich quick and money laundering scheme: DMG. In 2008 the mirage of —quick success and fast money as a legitimate reality—modeled by prominent figures, the revered and notorious alike, permitted Colombians by the droves³⁰ to participate in a multi-million dollar ponzi scheme. "No one wanted to hear the church say 'overnight money is a fallacy.' It was presented as a perfectly legitimate investment option. People understood that the President was behind it...to provide an alternative to coca production," explained a pas-

28 Editorial, 'De la Parapolitica', El Espectador, 21 Dec, 2008.

29 'Jefe paramilitar Mancuso afirma que controlan el 35 por ciento de los diputados surgidos de las legislativas.' El Tiempo, Bogotá, 12 Mar., 2002

30 The DMG group reports that two million Colombians have done business with them and had their lives changed. 'The DMG Faro' / 'El Farón del DMG,' Semana, 27, sept. 2008, viewed 25 mar. 2008 <http://www.semana.com/noticias-nacion/faraon/115944.aspx>

tor from Putumayo, the province where the DMG pyramid scheme originated. U.S. backed aerial fumigations, the quick solution to coca growing, has been a destructive failure.³¹ One illicit economy replaced another in Putumayo because no effective efforts were made to create a solid legal economy. Consequently, even after the veneer of legitimacy was dissolved and the DMG group, named for its founder's initials, was revealed as a money laundering business, especially Colombians in impoverished areas clamored for the easy money source to resume. "But it's all done now...there was a total economic collapse, a crisis. It's back to growing coca (for many people)," the pastor said.

Transforming a culture of ends justify the means. It is necessary to transform a culture in which ends justify the means, where enemy casualties translate into rewards and corruption is the road to concentrated executive power.

In government and the military, corruption, lies and disregard for the rule of law were employed for the 'greater good of the country,' but such maneuvers typically favor the interest of limited groups. The simplification of the conflict often serves to leave the economic and political structures as they are. Government officials and Colombian citizens alike readily accepted offers of quick money from institutions like drug trafficking and the DMG group that share a similar value system. But what appear to be quick fixes to complex problems are often doomed to failure and leave victims in their wake.

Degradation of the armed conflict, fracturing of illegal armed groups

Paramilitary violence and political control. Paramilitarism continued in spite of the demobilization³² and partial disintegration of the AUC structure. While some formally demobilized paramilitary continued with a broadly defined counterinsurgency agenda, others were completely absorbed in drug trafficking. The two are

31 For analysis and footage on the drug war strategy of aerial fumigations we recommend the 2008 Witness for Peace video, "Shoveling Water; War on Drugs, War on People."

32 The paramilitary demobilization occurred within the framework of the 2005 peace talks with the Uribe Administration. Law 975, commonly known as the Justice and Peace Law, was legislated for the process. According to official reports, more than 30,000 members were disarmed. It is now clear that the AUC recruited civilians to participate in the process to inflate numbers and provide an image of disarmament and reintegration into civilian life.

not mutually exclusive and both employed the paramilitaries' experience in terrorizing the civilian population. Compared with 67 in 2007, there were 53 paramilitary and rearmed paramilitary groups in 2008.³³ The experience of churches leads us to conclude that there are fewer paramilitary groups due to realignment.

Ongoing paramilitary control enforced through terror and coercion, and with the complicity of the armed forces, is well documented. Of the 120 violations attributed to the paramilitary, churches reported 10 killings by the paramilitary, more than by any other party to the conflict. The guerrilla, in turn, are reported to have killed eight people and Public Security forces to have executed four.

The paramilitary allegedly murdered the following people:

- Community leader from Chocó on February 15 with machetes (Case 1).
- Day laborer after a dispute with his boss, an alleged paramilitary associate, on April 19 (Case 6).
- Young adult, whose father was recently killed, was forced to get off the bus he was riding along with a second passenger on May 15 (Case 7).
- Community leader who resisted paramilitary control and aggression on June 5 (Case 8).
- Two young adults who sought dialogue with the paramilitary to address the persecution of one of their brothers, June 22 (Case 10).
- Community leader on October 21, apparently for his work in coca eradication (Case 12).
- Artisan on October 21, cause unknown (Case 13).
- Young man who was quartered and his body parts thrown in a river on November 15 because he refused to work with the paramilitary (Case 15).
- Young displaced man for refusing to work for the paramilitary on December 21 (Case 18).

33 Number of active "narco-paramilitary" groups in 2008 according to the Colombian nongovernmental organization Indepaz. Their sources: Cinep- Data Base of Human Rights and Political Violence, "Noche y Niebla," Jan-June 2008. General Secretary of the Support Mission of the Peace Process in Colombia, Organization of American States, trimester report, Jun 25 2008. National Police, Report, Nov 18 2008. Security and Democracy, report, May 2008. Human Rights Observatory of the Vice President of the Republic, Report, Jan 1 to Dec 2, 2008.

Forced disappearance allegedly by paramilitary:

- A community leader was disappeared on June 15 from Tieralta, Córdoba. Related threats forced 27 families, related to the disappeared leader, to displace (Cases 19, 37).

Geography and motives of paramilitary violence. The province of Antioquia registered the highest number of cases (11) perpetrated by the paramilitary. There was also a noteworthy rise in Córdoba (6 cases), the very location of the paramilitary demobilization. Exceptionally high levels of paramilitary violence registered in Córdoba are now a pattern (2006, 2007 and 2008) in our documentation.

The paramilitary continued to exert *political control* through violent coercion. In the October 4 case of Martha Cecilia, the paramilitary boss allegedly gave orders from prison for local community leaders to step-down so that his people could replace them in civic organizing (Case 50).

Paramilitary leaders' 2008 confessions of violent acts against thousands of victims revealed just the tip of the iceberg. The paramilitary *intimidated potential witnesses* to silence them (Cases 19, 32, 10, 46, 26, 28, 50).



The heading of this letter, distributed in Neiva, Huila warns, “The hour for social cleansing has arrived... We have identified who you are.” The authors note, “We do not accept responsibility if the innocent are killed...”

Land and property theft. Paramilitaries threatened and forcibly displaced families to secure territorial control for agribusiness interests, such as African palm (Case 36). House robbery for control was also evidenced (Case 47).

Waves of violence, referred to in Colombia as *social cleansing*, targeting sex workers, the GLBT³⁴ population, drug users, and supposed delinquents in urban centers nation-wide began in mid 2008 and continued throughout the year. The young person with drug problems (Case 67) illustrates the phenomena.

Churches continued to report the *crimes of omission of Public Security Forces and government officials* when faced with paramilitary operatives and territorial, social and political control. As reported by a church leader from Tolima, “local governments are aware of the situation, but they don’t take action” (Case 64).

Guerrilla violence: FARC and ELN. The FARC and ELN guerrilla groups were responsible for the second highest number of violations. Homicides (8), threats (47), displacements (37 individual [vs. collective] cases), and forced child soldier recruitment (3) attributed to the guerrilla describe how the guerrilla threat goes beyond kidnapping.

Although the FARC and ELN were significantly weakened by harsh blows delivered by State forces in 2008,³⁵ our numbers suggest that they are far from defeated. Five hundred families fled from FARC and army combat, resulting in the collective displacement of approximately 1,500 people (Cases 40 and 41), which demonstrated the challenge the FARC still represented to their military opponents and unarmed civilians.

Churches attributed eight homicides to the guerrilla (seven to the FARC and one to the ELN) in 2008 and 11 in 2007.

34 Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transvestite (GLBT)

35 The July 2nd Colombian intelligence and military operation, Operation Jaque, resulted in the freedom of 15 kidnap victims including former Presidential Candidate Ingrid Betancourt and three U.S. contract workers. FARC deaths or captures: FARC secretariat member Luis Edgar Devia Siva, better known by his nom de guerre Raul Reyes, was killed in a military operation on Ecuador territory on March 1, 2008. Regional commander José Juvenal Veranda, alias Ivan Rios, was killed by his own men on March 3, 2008. His second in command Nelly Avila Moreno, alias Karina, surrendered to the Colombian military in May 2008. In March 2008 government spokespeople announced that FARC Commander and founding member Pedro Antonio Marin, aka. Manual Marulanda or Tirofijo (sure shot) died of a heart attack.

The FARC guerrillas murdered the following people:

- Community leader from Cauca, after torturing him on February 20 (Case 2).
- Municipal council member in Caquetá on March 15 (Case 4).
- Community leader who was raising funds for a school at a bazaar, along with a teacher in Tolima on June 12 (Case 9).
- A married couple on November 18 in Caquetá because they refused to join the guerrilla (Case 16).
- A psychologist died when a medical mission to Caquetá went through a mined field on December 7 (Case 17).

The ELN tortured and killed a man in Arauca on October 26 (Case 14). He was seeking to resolve the situation of his niece who was supposedly an ELN military target (Case 45).

Recruitment of child soldiers. The guerilla participated in war making against the unarmed civilian population, including forced recruitment of child soldiers. Colombia's Constitutional Court observed that "forced recruitment is one of the main causes of displacement in the country."³⁶

- A 12-year-old was forced to displace from Arauca due to guerrilla attempts to forcibly recruit him (Case 49).

Evangelical and Protestant churches also experience the government's rigidity in the limitations imposed for participation in peace talks and humanitarian dialogues. The Catholic Church is the only mediator recognized by the government, which leads to a stalemate since the FARC has rejected Catholic Church leaders as mediators. Yet there is no openness on the part of the Administration to other mediators from civic groups and Protestant and Evangelical churches. In this way the government is denying Protestant churches' reconciling vocation and failing to respect the right to participation and the freedom and equality of religion. (See more page 33)

36 Corte Constitucional. Auto N° 251 de 2008, pages 5, 6.

- A pregnant single-mother was forced to flee with her ten children from Cauca when the guerrilla threatened to take her children (Case 42).
- Two minors from Antioquia were forcibly recruited by the guerrilla. The same group allegedly killed the father of one of the girls in 2006 (Case 30).

(See “Childhood under threat”, page 30, for more on the effects of Colombia’s armed conflict on children.)

These cases illustrate how the armed conflict has become an epidemic of multiple, fractured groups. A church leader described the situation as devolving into, paraphrasing the words of President Uribe, “a bunch of terrorist groups.” In effect, the Democratic Security Policy, Uribe’s banner project, has created the situation that he said initially existed to justify the military strategy.

A complex conflict requires a nuanced solution. Colombian victims are more than a handful of FARC hostages. Advocates of this reductionist view conceal truths that point to structural and ethical problems, paramilitary and public security force violence, and the humanitarian crisis. Silencing or eliminating those who introduce complexity prevents a more accurate and nuanced analysis from emerging.

President Uribe’s Administration assures Colombians and the diplomatic community alike that the guerrilla is nearly defeated and that Colombia’s problems are nearly resolved. The government puts forth an overly simplified analysis of the complex situation, and defends overly simplified solutions. Short cut solutions based on half-truths do not address the root problems of the conflict or the evolving complexities. The solution to Colombia’s internal conflict will be as nuanced, deliberate and protracted as the conflict itself. A pastor who promotes conversation between the warring armies says it is “not fast and not easy.” (Seed 2)

The solution to Colombia’s internal conflict will be as nuanced, deliberate and protracted as the conflict itself.

Childhood Under Threat

Forced recruitment, threats and sexual violence against children in Colombia

Forced recruitment and other war-related risks to minors grew in 2008.¹ This may be a response to the recent casualties and desertions that armed groups suffered. Children and adolescents have also been forced into the ranks of new groups during rearmament. But the guerrilla and paramilitary are not the only ones responsible; a Colombian coalition of nongovernmental organizations working to prevent forced recruitment of minors reported the extrajudicial execution of children and young people perpetrated by members of the Public Security Forces.²

Notwithstanding the negative trends of minors enmeshed in the armed conflict, 2008



Desaparecidos #4, graphite on paper by Daniel Esquivia Zapata

- 1 'Garantías y oportunidades para niños, niñas y jóvenes en riesgo de vinculación y/o amenazados por los grupos armados en Colombia,' La Red de Protección Especial, Feb 2009.
- 2 'La Coalición Colombia rechaza las ejecuciones extrajudiciales de jóvenes en diferentes regiones del país y exige investigaciones serias de los hechos', Coalición contra la vinculación de niños, niñas y jóvenes al conflicto armado en Colombia October 30, 2008.

also witnessed positive political and legislative developments. The Colombian state gained legal ground on the prevention of unlawful recruitment and the protection of children and youth at risk of recruitment. Furthermore, the Colombian Constitutional Court recognized in Court Order 251 that “the forced recruitment of children and adolescents by illegal armed groups is one of the main causes of displacement in the country.” For their parts, the Human Rights Unit of the Attorney General’s office named a specialized district attorney for the crime of recruitment of children and the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, ICBF) announced a campaign against impunity in crimes of unlawful recruitment.

In spite of the noteworthy advances at a national level, Colombia still lacks a holistic policy for the prevention of child recruitment. Local state and national authorities were unable to respond adequately to the risks of child recruitment across Colombia’s vast geography. Colombia’s judiciary faced difficulties in investigating the crime of unlawful recruitment of children.

The documented cases evidence patterns of human rights and International Humanitarian Law violations against children and adolescents in Colombia:

The parties to the conflict justified direct and indirect threats to minors with allegations that the children’s family members belonging to enemy groups. Entire families were threatened when they resisted the forced recruitment of their children. Other threats were justified by alleged participation in drug dealing, imprisonment, prostitution and juvenile vandalism. (See Cases 39, 42 and 49.)

We also registered cases of children wounded by land mines, gas cylinders and improvised explosive devices (IED). Girls suffered discrimination and sexual abuse by armed groups. They were not only harassed by combatants, but they were also directly abused (Case 56).

Churches as seeds of hope

The sacred “Yes” of the peacemaking community of faith. What can Colombian people of faith say in the face of corruption, injustice and protracted violence? Colombian churches speak truth through *being* intentional and active peacemaking communities. Their sacred yes confronts the narrative of human lies; their witness both condemns violence and invites redemption. Churches contrast the truth that they know with the future they are called to by meeting human needs and confronting the powers that prey on the vulnerable. Through their embrace of peace and justice, they declare peace is possible. Their faith-based and God-sustained choice of risky peacemaking constitutes a sacred yes to help show Colombia the path out of violent conflict:

- * Yes to the truth of the personal stories of persecuted victims, which are often denied by the government;
- * Yes to restorative justice that strives to make all things, and all people, new;
- * Yes to healing rather than nursing wounds to justify revenge;
- * Yes to dialogue for warring parties who have been speaking only through exchanging bullets.

Churches must not despair or lose sight of the peace that is possible. Christians claim a risen Lord, and so their communities must embody that hope even when their leaders and church premises are under violent attack.³⁷

37

We are indebted to John Howard Yoder 'The Church Witness to the State', Mark Nation 'The First Word Christians Say to Violence is 'Church'' and Miroslav Volf 'Exclusion and Embrace' for concepts and language in this section.

Violation of freedom and equality of religion. Many attacks and threats continued in 2008. The perpetrators of Pastor William Reyes' disappearance are unknown and no progress has been reported in investigations despite energetic political advocacy (Case 20). The army does not deny the assassination of Pastor Justo Tunubalá (Case 11). In addition, in 2008 Colombian churches reported death threats against pastors (Cases 29, 33 and 69) and a battery of violent behavior during services and on church premises; we registered an increase in violations of religious freedom and equality perpetrated by a wider array of actors than in previous years. Armed groups interrupted worship to read death threats (Cases 56 and 60). They offered money to rape the girls in the church and threatened to rape them themselves (Case 56). Illegal armed groups ordered churches to close (Case 54), silenced and displaced pastors (Cases 2, 61 and 62), and planted landmines around a church (Case 23).

Proclaiming truth within a narrative of lies. Often finding themselves targeted by a subculture of lies, corruption and violent dispute resolution, Colombian churches carry out their task of proclaiming that which makes for peace. Only visible, viable peace communities will persuade a deeply conflicted world that alternatives exist. In the absence of life-affirming alternatives, people immersed in cycles of violence will default to violent conflict when they feel threatened and will succumb to official government quick-fixes and shallow discourse rather than addressing the root causes of despair.

Spiritual imagination for what can be and the presence of desperate victims in their midst combine to liberate Colombia's peacemaking faith communities from the mental straightjacket of hostility and external threat that are forced upon them by their past. They are freed to speak new words and to live in the new world made possible by their faith. They are rising up to speak of violence suffered—their own and by those who come through the church doors (Seed 6). In a war for territorial control and economic gain, churches are securing land and creating productive alternatives for the dispossessed (Seed 3). In obedience to a Christian vocation of reconciliation and healing (Seed 1), churches affirm dialogue with all actors of the armed conflict (Seed 2).



Survivors from the Atlantic Coast act out their experiences of violence suffered in a resilience exercise.

Chapter 2.

CASES OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

CASES FROM 2008

HOMICIDE

CASE 1

HOMICIDE

Victim: Arnolando Bejarano, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: February 2008

Location: Istmina, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Arnolando was a married AIEC church leader. When alleged paramilitaries arrived in Istmina, they detained and later assassinated Arnolando with a machete. Many church leaders in the region had been threatened by alleged paramilitaries.

CASE 2

HOMICIDE TORTURE

Victim: Carlos Prieto*, of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: February 20, 2008

Location: Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Carlos Prieto* was a community leader. Alleged guerrillas from the FARC's 29th Mobile Front who had recently arrived to the region stopped him when he was passing by the guerrillas' military camp on

his horse with lumber for his house. People close to the victim indicated that, “they took him down the river and stripped him down. We found him naked. Every five or six meters we found pieces of his clothing; first his shirt, then his hat, then his pants and lastly, his underwear. Five meters away, we came to the place where they killed him. They stuck his head in the river and put a rock on top of him.” When community members asked guerrilla fighters about this incident, they initially denied their involvement. They later tried to justify their actions, accusing him of being an informant.

CASE 3

HOMICIDE FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Victim: Martín Ángel*, of the Pentecostal Church

Date: February 21, 2008

Location: Rioblanco, Tolima

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Army

Martín* was a farmer. According to witnesses, alleged members of the Army approached Martín* when he was taking his avocado harvest to the Rioblanco market. They accused him of being a guerrilla, shot and killed him and hid his body for a week. When community members asked the Army about his whereabouts, they gave no answer. Later they transported his body by helicopter to Neiva, Huila where it was delivered to his mother, at which time they accused him of being a guerrilla collabo-

rator. Church members believe that this execution was carried out in an attempt to increase the Army’s body count. There were frequent fights between the paramilitaries, Army and guerrillas in this area at the time of Martín’s* execution.

CASE 4

HOMICIDE THREAT

Victims: Elcer Hendo, of the Evangelical Church and El Doncello Council members

Date: March 2008

Location: El Doncello, Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Elcer was married with children and a council member in El Doncello. According to witnesses, on the night of the crime alleged members of the FARC were carrying out a military attack against council members in El Doncello municipality. Three heavily armed men arrived at Elcer’s house and immediately opened fire. The shooting occurred in front of his wife and children.

At the same time Elcer was killed, another group of heavily armed men were traveling on motorcycles to the homes of the other council members, the majority of whom were farmers without a high school education. One of the targeted council members reports that he escaped the attack because he was forewarned while attending mass with his family.

CASE 5

HOMICIDE

Victims: Carmen Rojas* and Aníbal Rojas*, of the Living Gospel Church

Date: April 2008

Location: Comineros community, Toribío, Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Army

Aníbal* and Carmen* were young adults and members of the Living Gospel Church worship team. According to witnesses, alleged members of the Colombian Army accused them of being guerilla collaborators. They shot them at close range in a house in Comineros. In the months leading up to the killings, the civilian population had been caught in the middle of frequent fighting and attacks in the area.

CASE 6

HOMICIDE

Victim: Nelson Enrique Manjarrés Ortiz

Date: April 19, 2008

Location: Cúcuta, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Nelson was a farmer. Alleged paramilitaries killed him after a labor dispute with his employer, who, according to community members, had paramilitary connections.

Nelson was eating at a stand in the Motilones neighborhood at approximately 8:00 p.m. when

paramilitaries pulled up in a red car. They took him to an unknown location. At approximately 3:30 a.m. the next day, April 20, Nelson's body was found on the stairs leading to the Cerro Norte neighborhood. His family only found out that he had been killed later that night, when they went to identify the body at the morgue.

Nelson had been forcibly displaced in March 2008 (Case 39) and went to Cúcuta in looking for work. Feeling anxious about his family's finances due to scarce family income, he decided to take a job on a farm owned by Mr. Orlando Ortiz in the community of La Llana, between Campo Dos and El Zulia. According to community members, Mr. Ortiz was an ally of paramilitaries in the area. Nelson worked for a month on the farm yet Mr. Ortiz refused to pay him. In the days prior to his assassination, Nelson was forced to return to Cúcuta penniless.

CASE 7

HOMICIDE

Victim: Miguel, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: May 2008

Location: Turbo, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Miguel was a 19-year-old farmer. He was traveling from Turbo to Apartadó with other young adults when alleged paramilitaries stopped the bus and assassinated them. According to witnesses, the

perpetrators indicated they were looking for other people. Miguel's father had also been recently killed (Case 78).

CASE 8

HOMICIDE THREAT

Victims: Bernabé Lavado*, Libia de Lavado* and their three children, of the Assemblies of God Church

Date: June 5, 2008

Location: Puerto Santander, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Thirty-eight-year-old Bernabé* was married to Libia*. They had three children. Bernabé* was a well-respected community leader who secured community development projects and a visit by President Uribe for a local community council meeting. According to witnesses, alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries took Bernabé* from his house to a small community where they shot and killed him. He was targeted because of his community leadership and resistance to the presence of illegal armed groups in the area (such as the Águilas Negras). Bernabé* and his family had previously received death threats.

CASE 9

HOMICIDE INJURY

Victims: Ciro Centeno*, of the Missionary Alliance Church, Aarón Álvarez* and Adela Aguilar*

Date: June 12, 2008

Location: Chaparral, Tolima

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Ciro* was assassinated by alleged guerrillas from the FARC's 25th Front while he and others were collecting donations for a school at a community event. They shot Ciro*, who died the next day in the Ibagué Hospital. In addition, a teacher was shot and killed and another individual was injured. Ciro* had not received death threats.

CASE 10

HOMICIDE THREAT

Victims: Julia Ochoa, Iván Ortiz and Marina Ochoa, of the Mennonite Brethren Church

Date: June 22, 2008

Location: Medellín, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Julia and her boyfriend Iván were assassinated by alleged paramilitaries during a meeting to intervene on behalf of Iván's siblings who had been threatened by paramilitaries. Paramilitaries later threat-

ened to kill Julia's mother, Marina, if she reported the assassinations.

CASE 11

HOMICIDE

Victim: Pastor Justiniano (Justo) Tunubalá Disor, of Paradise Church, of the New Jerusalem Mission

Date: September 17, 2008

Location: Jambaló, Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Army

Pastor Justo, an indigenous leader, was married to Rosa Emilia Collo. The couple had six children, ages six to 24. They sold homemade cheese to support their family. Alleged members of the Colombian Army executed Pastor Justo as he was traveling home after dropping off a church member at approximately 7:45 p.m.

Indigenous leaders believe that Pastor Justo was killed along the road. The Colombian Army claimed that Justo was a guerilla who was transporting another guerilla on his motorcycle. The Army maintained that the passenger shot a soldier in the foot at which time they returned fire, killing Justo.

Indigenous leaders publicly refuted the Army's claims by pointing to the facts that Justo's cadaver was the only one at the scene and that there was no evidence of injured soldiers. Community members,

indigenous authorities and Justo's family monitored the crime scene while they pressured for the Attorney General's Crime Scene Investigators (CTI), and not the Army, to collect evidence and retrieve the body. This occurred at noon the following day.

María Curtía, who lives near the scene of the crime, reported that she was forced to stay in her house the whole night of the execution.

Justo's family was finally able to recover his body in Popayán two days after his execution (September 19). His body was handed over by the morgue at 5:00 p.m. and was transported to his house for burial the next day, Saturday, September 20. The funeral was attended by hundreds of indigenous community members and church people from surrounding communities. On the local indigenous radio station, Voice of our Land, callers spoke out against the execution.

The Colombian Army's Pichincha Battalion sent word to Justo's widow that she needed to go to the Battalion headquarters for an interrogation. She went along with her brother-in-law Jorge Tunubalá. Each was separately interrogated, and asked to sign interrogation documents (of which they were not given a copy). The Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC) gave the family legal support, providing a lawyer.

CASE 12

HOMICIDE

Victim: Julio Martínez Polo*, of the Baptist Church

Date: October 21, 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Julio* was married with two children, ages six and seven. He was a farmer and was part of the Colombian Presidency's Forest Ranger program. He was also president of the local Community Council. Alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries assassinated him at his home while he was washing his children's clothes.

Julio* was alone as his family was in the town of Tierralta. At 6:30 p.m. neighbors heard multiple shots fired and half an hour later went to investigate. When they arrived, they called for Julio* but no one answered. They found him dead in his backyard. Community members believe he was killed because the Forest Ranger program promotes drug crop eradication, negatively affecting drug trafficking.

CASE 13

HOMICIDE

Victim: Adnien Alfonso Franco Arrieta, of the Inter-American Church of Colombia

Date: October 21, 2008

Location: El Bagre, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Adnien worked as an artisan. Alleged paramilitaries from the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces stopped and killed him on the road between Caucasia and Zaragoza. The motive is unknown and he had not received death threats.

CASE 14

HOMICIDE TORTURE

Victim: Juan Romero*

Date: October 26, 2008

Location: Arauquita, Arauca

Alleged Perpetrator: ELN

ELN guerrillas stopped, tortured and murdered Juan* in La Esmeralda between 10:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. In September 2008, Juan* had sought to intervene on behalf of his niece, a sixth grader, who was allegedly on an ELN hit list. The threats caused her forced displacement on August 11, 2008 (Case 45).

CASE 15

HOMICIDE TORTURE FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victim: Rafael Antonio Urrego

Date: November 2008

Location: Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Twenty-two-year-old Rafael was a farmer who lived with his mother and siblings. Alleged paramilitaries assassinated him, quartered his body and dumped it in a river after he refused to work with them.

In 2007, the family had moved to Antioquia from southern Bolívar in search of a better paying job. In February of 2008 he ran into the Águilas Negras paramilitary group that was taking over the area. This illegal armed group forced him to work for them. The family was forcibly displaced as a result. According to Rafael's mother, the armed group continued looking for him until they found and killed him in November.

CASE 16

HOMICIDE

Victims: Alberto Ramírez* and Lady Maria González*

Date: November 18, 2008

Location: Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Alberto Ramírez*, a farmer, and his wife, Lady Maria González*, a teacher, had two daughters and a son. According to witnesses, alleged guerrillas—dressed in black—arrived to the school where Lady Maria* taught. They ordered the children back to class, took Alberto* and Lady Maria* out of the school, and forced them to walk down a dirt road for five minutes where they shot and killed them. Later a neighbor sent her farmhands out to look for them. They found the couple shot to death. They took the bodies to the appropriate authorities in the nearest county seat (Algeciras, Huila) so they could be buried. Family members believe that they were killed for having refused to carry out guerrilla activities.

After the couple's murder, the FARC issued death threats to more than 50 of their relatives, who then displaced (Case 52).

CASE 17

HOMICIDE ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victim: Diana Marcela Parra Pinto, of the Presbyterian Church

Date: December 7, 2008

Location: San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Diana was a counselor and educator with the Colombian Family Welfare Agency (ICBF). Alleged guerrillas from the Teófilo Forero Front mined a road on which Diana was traveling with a group of 20 employees from the ICBF, the local hospital and the Mayor's Office. Diana died when a mine detonated. A survivor explained that, "when we felt multiple explosions, what I remember is that we were stuck in the middle of a guerrilla minefield. What came after that is what my friends and family have told me."

CASE 18

HOMICIDE FORCED DISAPPEARANCE THREAT

Victims: José*, Lucía* and Abdías Betancourt*, of the Christian Church

Date: December 21, 2008

Location: Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alleged paramilitaries, led by a trusted acquaintance of José*, asked him to go for a ride with them in a car. Three hours later, they murdered him. Months earlier, José* and his family had been forcibly displaced from their farm when both guerrillas and the Colombian Army demanded they be given food. Previously José's* father had been killed by guerrillas.

When José* arrived to town as a displaced person, the paramilitaries asked him to go back to the farm and work for them. The family believes that José's* refusal was the motive of the killing. Since José's* assassination, the family has received death threats, particularly his brother.

Lucía* describes her situation this way: "this family has been caught between the guerrilla, the paramilitaries and the Army...these groups always attack families as they try to link them with one of the groups that operates in this area...We don't know what to do as we've already lost our land and we have not been able to get it back."

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

CASE 19

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Azaél Hernández, Fanny Montiel, Edil Hernández, Róger Hernández, Nelson Hernández, Leonel Hernández and families from the town of Murmullo Medio, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: June 15, 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Azaél Hernández was a community leader. He and his wife, Fanny Montiel, had four children between the ages of three and 16. Alleged rearmed paramilitaries under the command of Rafael Benjamín Contreras forcibly disappeared Azaél Hernández. Hernández left his house for Tierralta at 9:30 a.m. on a motorcycle. He was last seen when he was stopped near Batata by a group of men identified as rearmed paramilitaries. Local witnesses indicated that the group took him to El Revoliático where they shot him and threw his body over the Urrá Dam.

Days later, while searching for his body, family members learned that many of their names were on a hit list. Consequently 27 families were displaced from Murmullo Medio to Tierralta on June 24 (Case 37). For some, this was their third forced displace-

ment by the paramilitaries since 1996. At the date of this writing, many of these families face death threats and are living in an abandoned school.

Azaél's wife, Fanny Montiel, reports that, "we are afraid that all of us are at risk because we were crazy enough to speak out and report what happened to the Mayor's office, the Army and other government agencies. Today, if we were to return to our community, I am afraid none of us would survive."

Despite being indicted by the Attorney General's office, Contreras, the alleged paramilitary commander, has continued to threaten Fanny, saying that she "will pay just like Azaél."

CASE 20

FORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Victims: Pastor William Reyes, Idia Miranda, William Reyes Miranda, Luz Nelly Reyes Miranda and Estefanía Reyes Miranda, of the Light and Truth Church, of the Inter-American Church of Colombia

Date: September 25, 2008

Location: Valledupar, Cesar

Alleged Perpetrator: Unknown

Pastor William Reyes, married to Idia Miranda and the father of William Reyes Miranda, 19, Luz Nelly Reyes Miranda, 16, and Estefanía Reyes Miranda, nine, disappeared when he was traveling from Valledupar to Maicao. Hundreds of community

members marched in protest of the pastor's disappearance (Seed of Hope, 4). To date, the Attorney General's Office has not reported any progress in the investigation.

INJURY

CASE 21

ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE INJURY

Victims: Elizabeth Ramírez C. and her father

Date: February 21, 2008

Location: Zaragoza, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Elizabeth and her father, artisan broom and mop makers, left town to purchase work materials. Upon their return to their community, Elizabeth stepped on a mine set by alleged paramilitaries. When the mine detonated, Elizabeth lost both legs and her father was wounded by shrapnel. Now she walks with the aid of prosthetic limbs.

CASE 22

INJURY ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victim: Rebeca Solórzano*

Date: February 2008

Location: Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Rebeca* is a farmer with two children who was widowed 12 years ago when the FARC murdered her husband. She was walking down a dirt road in her community when she stepped on a mine set by alleged guerrillas from the FARC's Teófilo Forero Front. The explosion badly injured one breast.

CASE 23

INJURY ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victim: Unknown

Date: March 2008

Location: Zaragoza, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

A farmhand was working at dusk when he stepped on a mine set by paramilitaries. He lost his right leg in the explosion and has therefore been out of work, causing economic duress for his family.

CASE 24

INJURY

Victim: Abel Benítez*

Date: June 2008

Location: Medellín, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Abel Benítez*, the son of Ana María Bermúdez (Case 32), worked in a store in downtown Medellín. Alleged paramilitaries under the command of “Memín” tried to kill him in June. He miraculously escaped with only injuries. Paramilitaries then threatened and harassed Ana María to keep her from testifying against “Memín”.

CASE 25

INJURY

ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victims: Greidys Gonzaga Castillo and her unidentified cousin

Date: July 20, 2008

Location: San Pablo, Bolívar

Alleged Perpetrators: Combatants

Greidys, her cousin, and approximately 15 others were walking home from church when her cousin stepped on a mine. The shrapnel hit Greidys’ legs, arms and right eye. One of her cousin’s legs had to be amputated and she was blinded in one eye.

TORTURE

CASE 26

TORTURE

ATTEMPTED MURDER

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

THREAT

Victim: Lili Jaimes*, of the Mennonite Church

Date: August 31, 2008

Location: Bogotá

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Lili*, the mother of five children, was a farmer before being displaced to the city. Paramilitaries began to harass her after she reported the murder of her husband, reportedly by the Colombian Army, the murder of other family members as well as paramilitaries’ attempts to steal her lands (Case 73, *A Prophetic Call, Report No. 3—PC3*).

Lili* recounts the attempted disappearance that led to her displacement as follows, “just before 7:00 p.m., I was arriving home to the Altos de Sotavento neighborhood in Ciudad Bolívar. As I crossed a wooden bridge two men, one black and one white, both with glasses, approached me and grabbed me. They attacked me, threw me to the ground, they then hit me and swore at me. They said, ‘we are going to make her disappear.’ They hit me on my shoulders, back and arms. I have bruises on my hands, arms and my whole body aches. They grabbed me

by the necklace I had around my neck and tried to choke me, scratching my neck. They took a copy of my identification out of my pocket and while they both looked at it, I escaped. Despite the fact that the men did not identify themselves, I am sure they were paramilitaries who planned to kill me.” After this attack, Lili* was displaced.

ATTEMPTED MURDER

CASE 27

ATTEMPTED MURDER THREAT

Victim: Juan Carlos Martínez, of the Christian Crusade Church

Date: March 2008

Location: Santa Isabel, Tolima

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alleged paramilitaries fired upon Juan Carlos while he was weeding his vegetable garden. As he took off running, they continued shooting at him and calling him an informant. Juan believes that he was attacked because an armed group went to his house and requested water days earlier. The FARC, the Águilas Negras paramilitary group and the Bolcheviques (ELN) all operate in the area.

CASE 28

ATTEMPTED MURDER FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victim: Manuel Narciso Díaz Segura, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: September 11, 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Manuel Narciso Díaz Segura, a community leader, is married to Manuela Díaz Vuelvas with whom he has adult children. Their five-year-old granddaughter, Nicol, lived with them. At approximately 7:00 p.m., a hooded man entered Manuel Narciso’s house through the backyard. Manuel Narciso noticed the door was open and went to investigate. The hooded man took out a handgun and pulled the trigger three times, without the gun firing. Manuel Narciso thought that this was a joke and asked him to stop. When the man pulled the trigger for the fourth time the handgun fired; the shot hit him above his mouth on the left side. The man said, “maybe the OAS can save you,” and ran out. Manuel Narciso had been participating in the Organization of American States (OAS) Mission to Accompany the Peace Process workshops for Community Council presidents.

Manuela, Manuel Narciso’s wife, arrived soon thereafter and sought help. Hours later he was transferred to the Montería Hospital. The alleged perpetrator belonged to the Los Paisas paramilitary group. This

group was seemingly concerned about the information being provided to the OAS Mission.

Manuel Narciso, Manuela, their son and granddaughter-Dayro Narciso Díaz and Luisa Fernandez-, and Nicol were forcibly displaced as a result.

Despite this attempted murder and the aftereffects, Manuel Narciso's application to the Colombian government for recognition as a displaced person was rejected. According to the Colombian government entity responsible for aid to the displaced, the Social Aid Agency (Acción Social), after investigating with "civilian and military officials in the region...there was no security incident, death threats or displacements of civilians in the area by armed groups." This decision has been appealed.

CASE 29

ATTEMPTED MURDER FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Pastor Pedro Mosquera and his family, of the Mennonite Brethren Church and Berreucú (Baudó) Church Community

Date: September 2008

Location: Istmina, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Pastor Pedro was outspoken in calling on armed groups to respect the rights of families and local

communities. Alleged paramilitaries threatened to kill him, along with the rest of his family and the community, and accused them of being guerrilla supporters. Pedro survived an attempted murder by alleged paramilitaries. Persistent threats eventually forced Pedro and his family to relocate.

FORCED RECRUITMENT OF CHILDREN AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

CASE 30

FORCED RECRUITMENT OF CHILDREN AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Victims: Geny Perea and her friend, of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: October 25, 2008

Location: Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

Alleged guerrillas forcibly recruited Geny, along with a friend, by tricking her and taking advantage of the pain she felt over the death of her father, who was killed by the guerrillas in 2006.

KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING

CASE 31

KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING THREAT

Victim: Pastor Luz Edith, of the Inter-American Church of Colombia

Date: February 16, 2008

Location: Tarazá, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

The FARC detained Pastor Luz Edith at a roadblock and interrogated her for two days. They then threatened her, warning her that they would be monitoring her to see if she was an informant. They reiterated that she must not report the incident and then released her.

Paramilitaries had displaced Pastor Luz Edith two months prior. Due to her recent experience of displacement, a church and organization that support displaced people invited her to a meeting in Medellín. She was stopped and detained by the FARC on her way home.

CASE 32

KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Ana María Bermúdez and her children: Abel Benítez*, Carolina, José Iván and Miguel Antonio

Date: March 2008

Location: Medellín, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Fifty-eight-year-old Ana María Bermúdez is a beauty products saleswoman and mother of four adult children: Abel Benítez*, Carolina, José Iván and Miguel Antonio. Paramilitary threats and harassment forced Ana María and her family to relocate several times beginning in March. She was again forcibly displaced when paramilitaries surrounded her house, giving her an hour to leave or be killed, along with her five-year-old granddaughter. Soon thereafter one of her children escaped an attempted murder (Case 24).

A month prior, in February of 2008, Ana María refused to allow alleged paramilitaries under the command of “Memín” to use the balcony of her house as a paramilitary watchtower in the neighborhood. The group kidnapped two of Ana María’s children as a result. Out of fear for her children’s well being, Ana María ultimately relented and rented the house to them. But when her children were still not released, she filed a kidnapping report with the At-

torney General's office, the Human Rights Ombudsman and the United Nations High Commissioner's Office. Miraculously, her children were able to escape. Ana María was a key witness in a case against the leadership of this armed group, and when her identity was revealed she received the death threats and suffered the attacks described above.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

CASE 33

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Arnulfo Moreno Velásquez,

Dilcia María Mosquera and the couple's infant, of the Global Missionary Movement Church

Date: January 8, 2008

Location: Arauquita, Arauca

Alleged Perpetrators: Combatants

Thirty-six-year-old Arnulfo and his wife, Dilcia, 32, are the parents of a one-year-old. According to the victim, multiple armed groups forced them to flee the area "because they are Christians and their unwillingness to support illegal groups." Colombian military offensives have been carried out in the area and FARC and ELN guerrillas have also been active.

CASE 34

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Elva Rosa Álvarez, Sixto Valero, Ana Elvia Valero, Luis Alfredo Valero, Alexander Valero, Omaira Valero, Davidson Rivera and Omaira and their son, of the Global Missionary Movement Church

Date: January 21, 2008

Location: Arauca

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

Omaira and Davidson were in a farmer leadership-training program. The ELN and FARC guerrillas pressured them to prepare food for the soldiers. A victim described the situation; "They would force us to slaughter a cow and cook it for them." Another victim added; "We refused to cook for them so they threatened to kill us or forcibly recruit my children unless we fled." Therefore, the family was forced to flee. There was frequent fighting between the government security forces and the guerrillas in the area in which they lived. Their church organized peace marches.

CASE 35

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Pastor Zoila Amada and her four children

Date: January 22, 2008

Location: Riosucio, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Zoila, who served as a pastor, was widowed when her husband was murdered (Case 77). She has four children, the youngest of whom is four years old. After residents of Belén de Bajirá—including Zoila—received death threats from alleged paramilitaries, she and her family were forced to flee the community.

CASE 36

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Lea Balaguer*, Luz Balaguer*, Rubén* (Lea's* son), Abercio Durán*, Abilio Enríquez* and Acacio Fernández*, of the Mennonite Church

Date: February 3, 2008

Location: Bogotá

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries tried to steal land belonging to Lea* in Tibú, Norte de Santander

in order to grow African palm. According to the victim, a young man got out of a truck near Lea's* home, approached her, insulted and threatened to kill her and indicated that they knew where to find her. Therefore on February 9, Lea* and four family members were forced to flee to another city.

CASE 37

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Twenty-seven families related to Azaél Hernández

Date: February 15, 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Twenty-seven families, relatives of Azaél Hernández (Case 19), were threatened and were forcibly displaced. Generalized pressure from newly rearmed paramilitaries was compounded by threats due to Azaél's disappearance and the appearance of the names of another 11 family members on a paramilitary hit list. Many of these families had already been forcibly displaced twice before by paramilitaries and had returned to work on a farm between Batata and Murmullo Medio when they were displaced for the third time in 10 years.

CASE 38

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Thirty church families living along the Suruco River

Date: February 2008

Location: Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Three communities living along the Suruco River—where the majority of the residents are churchgoers—were displaced by alleged paramilitaries. Paramilitaries terrorized the community with death threats, disappearances and violent demands and accused the families of providing support to the guerrillas. A total of 30 families were displaced.

CASE 39

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Nelson Enrique Manjarrés Ortiz, Adela Forero Rodríguez and their two children, of the Christian Church

Date: March 2008

Location: Tibú, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Nelson lived in El Brandy—in La Gabarra, Tibú municipality—until March 2008 when alleged paramilitaries arrived. The paramilitaries demanded they leave the area and so they fled to Cúcuta. Nelson was later murdered (Case 6).

CASE 40

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: 500 families

Date: March and May 2008

Location: Puerto Libertador, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

In November 2007, March 2008 and May 2008, a total of 500 families were displaced from Puerto Libertador municipality due to frequent fighting between guerrillas and the Colombian Army (Case 41).

CASE 41

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: 500 families

Date: March and May 2008

Location: Puerto Libertador, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Army

In November 2007, March 2008 and May 2008, a total of 500 families were forcibly displaced from Puerto Libertador. In November 2007, 72 families from La Danta were forcibly displaced to the town of Río Verde. Thirty-eight of these families were members of the AIEC's New Light Church.

In the wake of fighting between the Colombian Army and guerrillas on February 29, 2008, 170 families were forcibly displaced from La Jagua, Tres Pali-

tos and Mina Ra due to pressure from both fighting forces. The families fled to the town of Río Verde. Forty-seven of these families were members of the AIEC's Bethesda Church.

The Colombian Army burned down 15 houses and the families' food crops damaging forty-six hectares of land in the fire. Residents believe the Colombian Army accused them of being guerrilla collaborators. They were forced to flee due to the Colombian Army's actions.

An additional 258 families from seven communities (Altamira, Viernes Santo, Santa Maria, Alto las Flores, La Secadora, Alto San Pedro and Aguas Lindas) were forcibly displaced in May 2008. These families joined the others in Río Verde.

CASE 42

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Flora Ordóñez Palomino, Adalberto Gálvez, Adelfo and Adelino (Flora's children), Mabel Estela Arboleda Ordóñez and individuals from the community of displaced persons

Date: March 2008

Location: Timbiquí, Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Forty-eight-year-old Flora, an Afrocolombian, is a single mother with ten children between the ages

of seven and 19. Four of her children live with her. FARC guerrillas threatened to take Flora's children from her. She was forced to flee due to these threats compounded by fumigations by the Colombian National Police and paramilitary presence in the area. Flora attempted to register as an internally displaced person, but at the time of the writing of this report, she had not received a letter confirming her displaced status and was living in one room with her children, including a pregnant daughter. Flora said, "there were approximately 20 families that were forced to flee quickly from the area due to violence and threats."

CASE 43

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Jorge Vides; his wife Orlina and his daughter Heidi, of Canaan Evangelical Church of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: March 16, 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Jorge and his wife Orlina had a one year old daughter and were expecting their second child at the time of the crime. Jorge was a community leader in the Villa Madeira displaced person resettlement community. The community had been resettled in 1996. Alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries threatened Jorge, leading to his family's displacement. Jorge

reported that on March 16, “two men showed up at my door at around 9:00 p.m. They put a gun to my head, said they were from the Águilas Negras and accused me of being a police informant. They said that they would be back the next day and I had to leave or they would kill me.” Jorge spent the night at his in-laws’ house and then went into hiding in a local Tierralta church that offered him refuge. Along with his wife and daughter, he was forced to flee to another city on March 20.

Weeks prior to the death threat, a group of Águilas Negras had demanded Jorge give them food and he had refused to do so. The day prior to the death threat, Jorge reported that incident to the Tierralta Police Chief.

CASE 44

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Felipe González*, Marta de González*, Timoteo González*, Lot González* and Tadeo González*, of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church

Date: May 27, 2008

Location: Huila

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Alleged guerrillas from the FARC’s 25th Front threatened the González* family. The guerrillas threatened to take the family’s eldest children, be-

tween the ages of 11 and 14. This threat, repeated multiple times, forced the family to flee to another province.

CASE 45

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Lucía Romero* and María Elena Romero*, of the Assemblies of God Church

Date: August 11, 2008

Location: Arauquita, Arauca

Alleged Perpetrator: ELN

Lucia* was a sixth grade student in Juan Jacobo Rousseau School. María Elena* heard rumors from her neighbors that ELN guerrillas had drafted a list of approximately 40 children to kill. The rumors were seemingly confirmed by the killings of boys and girls on the list. According to local church members, the threats arose because some of the children in the school—controlled by the ELN—spoke with police officers. Therefore the ELN believed they were informants. On August 11, Lucía* fled the area and has been able to continue her schooling in another location. María Elena*, a single mother with three children, was left by her husband who was involved with the guerrillas. Her brother was murdered when he intervened on Lucia’s behalf with the ELN (Case 14).

CASE 46

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Daniel Fals* and Raquel de Fals*,
of the Mennonite Church

Date: August 17, 2008

Location: Bogotá

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Thirty-seven-year-old Daniel* is married to thirty-year-old Raquel*. At the time of the crime they had a newborn daughter. Daniel* works in refrigeration and plumbing. According to the victims, alleged paramilitaries tried to kill Daniel* after having forcibly displaced him in September 2007. His wife was forcibly displaced in February 2008. Daniel* reports on the crime:

I was on my way home from church when I once again had the unfortunate surprise of seeing the blue Ford Explorer. Two paramilitaries, Alex and Volunto of the Central Bolívar Bloc were inside the car. They are the same ones who tried to kill me on July 30, 2007 in Barrancabermeja. When they saw me, they drew a weapon and they aimed at me. But as it was a Sunday, which is a busy business day in that neighborhood, there were a lot of people on the street. I was able to run into a nearby neighborhood. I cried as I ran because I didn't know what to do.

The 2007 attempted murder occurred after Daniel* reported the November 2006 murder of a family

member to the Colombian Navy. The killing was allegedly carried out by Central Bolívar Bloc paramilitaries under the command of Rodrigo Pérez Alzate, known as “Julián Bolívar.” Today “Julián Bolívar” is in jail and testifying as part of the Justice and Peace process. Daniel* reported that, “although Commander ‘Julián Bolívar’ has demobilized, he is still in charge, giving orders from prison. He is still in touch with his subordinates and he has people killed who file complaints against him and his Bloc. Commander ‘Julian’ doesn’t like reports to be filed about him and that is why he and his men are after me, to shut me up.”

CASE 47

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victims: María Rondán,
Rosalía (María’s daughter) and Josefina
(María’s granddaughter),
of the Mennonite Brethren Church

Date: September 10, 2008

Location: Medellín, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

In January 2008, José Iván, María’s son, called her and threatened that she would be killed unless she gave her Salvador neighborhood house

to the paramilitaries through a notarized letter (to create the appearance of a legal sale). Although she initially refused, threats and pressure from armed men that visited her house coerced her compliance. On September 10, she signed over her property and, homeless, was forced to live with her daughter and granddaughter in a small rented room. According to Maria, her troubles began when her son got involved with drug trafficking paramilitaries. His whereabouts have been unknown since 2006.

CASE 48

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Antonio Alberto Mosquera Borja and family, of the Berrequí (Baudó) Mennonite Brethren Church

Date: September 2008

Location: Istmina, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alleged paramilitaries forced Antonio and his family to flee under threat of death.

CASE 49

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Adrián Freddy Pérez* and his grandmother, Rosalba*, of the Assemblies of God Church

Date: September 2008

Location: Arauquita, Arauca

Alleged Perpetrator: Unknown

Twelve-year-old Adrián Pérez* lived with his grandmother, Rosalba*, since his mother abandoned him when he was six months old and his father was murdered. In September 2008, he was forced to flee from Arauquita due to threats of forced recruitment by armed groups.

CASE 50

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Martha Cecilia Méndez Cervantes, Rigoberto Isidro Lobo, Omar David Isidro Méndez, Osmer Isidro Méndez and Osneider Isidro Méndez, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: September 2008

Location: Tierralta, Córdoba

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Church and community leader Martha Cecilia is married to Rigoberto Isidro Lobo. Together they have three children: 17-year-old Omar David, 13-

year-old Osmer Isidro and 11-year-old Osneider. The paramilitaries threatened Martha on numerous occasions.

During the first six months of 2008 the paramilitary leader known as “Commander 08” and “the devil” formally demobilized. Authorities later captured and incarcerated him for his continued paramilitary activity. His son took over control of his group. According to Martha, in September the paramilitary commander’s son announced in public that Martha was behind his father’s arrest and that “she was going to pay for it.” These affirmations worried the entire family and, due to the threat, Rigoberto displaced.

The paramilitary leader known as “Commander 08” began to threaten Martha in 2007 due to her strong community leadership (Case 76, *PC3*). According to community members, “The area is still controlled by paramilitaries. The leader gives orders from prison, and some paramilitaries have secured government jobs. Here we think this may be the fulfillment of demobilization negotiation conditions.”

CASE 51

THREAT FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victims: Luis Mario Sandoval and family

Date: October 2008

Location: Bogotá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Forty-two-year-old Luis is a farmer. He and his wife have three children, ages five, nine and 10. He and his family were threatened by alleged guerrillas. He was displaced after a death threat due to his participation in the Forest Ranger Program (Case 50, *PC3*). Two alleged guerrillas, dressed as Usme hospital workers, went to Luis’s rented house in the Alfonso López neighborhood and asked if they were home. The house’s owner said that they were not home. He later called the hospital and confirmed that they had not sent anyone to the house. Due to this persecution, the family was displaced again.

CASE 52

FORCED DISPLACEMENT HUMAN SHIELD THREAT

Victims: Álvaro Barrera Barragán,
María Jesús Camacho,
Hernán Camacho Saavedra,
Luis Humberto Camacho,
Felipe García Méndez,
Jorge Antonio Saavedra,
Rubiel Saavedra Camacho,
Edilberto Saavedra Camacho,
Luz Marina Saavedra and displaced relatives

Date: November 20, 2008

Location: Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

More than 50 families, including the three orphaned children of Alberto Ramírez* and Lady Maria González* and nine Christian families, were forcibly displaced to other provinces. They were forced to abandon 24 cattle ranches. After murdering Alberto Ramírez* and Lady Maria González* (Case 16), the FARC issued death threats to their family, warning them that if they did not leave, they would kill them. They took cover in rented houses, temporary shelters as well as government and non-profit offices. At the writing of this report, some threatened individuals still remained in the community.

CASE 53

FORCED DISPLACEMENT HUMAN SHIELD THREAT

Victims: Juan Calixto* and his two children,
of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church
of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: December 2008

Location: Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

Juan* has two children and a nephew he helped raise. Alleged guerrillas harassed, threatened and searched for Juan* because, the family believes, his nephew joined the Army. A family friend reported that, “They searched for him over a two-day period until they found him. They went to his house, but fortunately he was not there. But upon his return, he saw two men come out of his house and he fled. Since December the family has received death threats and there are suspicious people keeping watch, yet the family is too scared to go to the authorities.”

HUMAN SHIELD

CASE 54

HUMAN SHIELD THREAT RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Victims: Pastors Miguel García*, Vera de García* and their two children

Date: June 5, 2008

Location: Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

For over 10 years, Miguel* and Vera*, a married couple with two children, had been working as farmers and pastors in a local community. Alleged guerrillas from the FARC's Teófilo Forero Front occupied Miguel* and Vera*'s family farm, using it as a base of operations. They forced the family to work for them, putting Miguel* and Vera* in a very uncomfortable and risky situation. The family is worried that someone may accuse them of being guerrilla supporters. The guerrillas threatened to burn their house down when they found out that there was a worship gathering there every night, something the guerrillas had prohibited. The guerrillas have prohibited all the families in this area from leaving.

CASE 55

HUMAN SHIELD THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Victim: A church affiliated with the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: December 2008

Location: Cauca

Alleged Perpetrators: Colombian Army, Guerrillas

The church's pastor has complained about indiscriminate bombings and the use of landmines in fighting between the guerrillas and the Colombian Army. He reports that, "in December four bombs were detonated half a block from my church. While no civilians were injured or killed, the emotional damage ran deep. For a long time grenades were used in the warring factions' fighting. These things happen to us almost daily at this point."

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

CASE 56

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE THREAT

Victim: The pastor of the Santa María del Darién Church, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: June 2008

Location: Unguía, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

The AIEC has a church in Santa María del Darién. Águilas Negras paramilitaries arrived in the area in June 2008 and committed numerous violations, particularly against women and girls, including rape. The paramilitaries often showed up at the church with a mocking attitude and threatened the pastor. They told the entire community that they would pay \$25 million pesos³⁸ to any man who raped a girl in the church building. They gathered all the children together and offered \$100,000 pesos to anyone who would start a fight in the church.

38

Approximately US\$14,500.

THREAT

CASE 57

THREAT

Victim: Pastor Pedro Pérez*, of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: January 2008

Location: Palmira, Valle

Alleged Perpetrator: Unknown

Pastor Pedro* received a call from a man that indicated he was from the Palmira militia. The man on the telephone said, “We know that you are honest and therefore we have chosen you to go to Cauca to see a couple of people from whom we need proofs of life.” Pedro* refused to collaborate.

A week later, Pedro* got a second call from the same person. The person on the telephone said, “We want you to do us a favor and add \$30,000 pesos to prepaid cell phones for us. Put two cards’ worth on each phone.” He called the pastor eight times total. Each time the pastor refused to do his bidding. He finally stopped calling.

CASE 58

THREAT

Victims: Milton Madera, Noelia Amariles and Julia Yépez

Date: January 12, 2008

Location: Cartagena, Bolívar

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Government

Milton, Noelia and Julia are displaced persons from different areas along the Atlantic Coast. They have tried to enter into government programs for displaced people, but Cartagena's Social Aid Agency (Acción Social)—the Colombian government entity responsible for aid to the displaced—has treated them poorly, humiliated them and even threatened them. To date they have not been officially recognized as displaced persons.

CASE 59

THREAT

Victim: Juan Carlos Tibizay

Date: February 2008

Location: Cartagena, Bolívar

Alleged Perpetrators: Colombian Government, Paramilitaries

Forty-five-year-old Juan Carlos is married with two children and provides leadership to a group of displaced persons. He has also worked as a political party activist. Juan Carlos and others from his group in Cartagena called for recognition of the

rights of the displaced and even took the Colombian Government to court to ensure their demands were heard. A staff member of the Cartagena Social Aid Agency (Acción Social), the government entity that provides aid to the displaced, threatened Juan Carlos, indicating that if he did not stop working with the displaced he would be putting his life at risk. He also threatened to go to the Attorney General's office. Juan Carlos also received three threatening telephone calls from the Águilas Negras paramilitary group. The caller told him that if he continued his leadership role with the displaced persons from southern Bolívar "anything could happen to him."

CASE 60

THREAT

Victim: Churches in the Medellín neighborhoods of *comunas* 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 13

Date: March 2008

Location: Medellín, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries passed out flyers in Christian churches in the impoverished neighborhoods of Medellín's *comunas*, demanding they be read during worship services. The text began with words from a well-known television commercial: "Sir or Ma'am, do you know where your child is?" They went on to read, "Beginning today, we will ensure your child is home by 10:00 p.m. If not, they will go to sleep for eternity. Sincerely,

the Águilas Negras' urban social cleansing unit." These death threats terrified the pastors and parents as many young adults participated in church activities until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.

CASE 61

THREAT

Victim: Pedro Mendoza, of the Christ the Center Church

Date: March 2008

Location: Colombia, Huila

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Forty-five-year-old Pedro Mendoza was threatened by alleged guerrillas from the FARC's 25th Front. The guerrillas said he needed to work with them or he "knew what would happen." The guerrillas regularly visited his community and reiterated their death threats. Locals believe their goal was to force all the pastors from the area. The pressure intensified after the FARC murdered two local pastors, Joel Cruz García and Humberto Mendez, in Huila on July 5, 2007 (Cases 15 and 16, *PC3*).

CASE 62

THREAT

Victim: Antonio Palma Riascos

Date: March 16, 2008

Location: Colombia, Huila

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Antonio Palma Riascos is a farmer who was under pressure to work for the FARC. Members of the FARC militia went to his house regularly, telling him that he needed to work with them "or else". According to members of local churches, after Pastor Joel Cruz García was murdered on July 5, 2007 in Colombia, Huila (Case 16, *PC3*), churches have been under "constant threat". Members of the community report that the Colombian Army has built a military base in the area, but the FARC continue to control the region.

CASE 63

THREAT

Victims: Paola Ruiz and Yudi Ruiz, of the Pan-American Church

Date: March 25, 2008

Location: Venadillo, Tolima

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Paola Ruiz and Yudi Ruiz were in the town's central plaza when alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries pulled up on a motorcycle and handed them a leaflet. The leaflet bore a drawing of a black eagle and a warning that children should go to bed early or they

would be killed. Paola and Yudi were given eight days to leave town. Terrified residents began putting their children to bed between 7:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to keep them from being murdered.

CASE 64

THREAT

Victims: Mari Campos, Luz Campos and Juanito Campos, of the Pan-American Church

Date: May 25, 2008

Location: Venadillo, Tolima

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Mari, Luz and Juanito were at home when a young man from the neighborhood, allegedly a paramilitary, rode up on a bicycle and handed them a piece of paper that warned that if Juanito didn't go to bed by 9:00 p.m., they would "put him to rest" (kill him). This area was historically controlled by guerrillas, but at the time of the writing of this report all armed actors were present. Locals report that the local government has not taken any steps to address this matter.

CASE 65

THREAT

Victim: Martha Parra, of the Christ the Center Church

Date: June 2008

Location: Colombia, Huila

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Martha was threatened by alleged FARC guerrillas while she was walking on her farm. They told her not to monitor the area because "we don't want informants." Martha's brother, Pastor Joel Cruz García, was murdered by alleged FARC guerrillas on July 5, 2007 in Colombia, Huila (Case 16, *PC3*). Her family has since received death threats. This incident occurred in an area with frequent fighting between the Colombian Army and the guerrillas. Residents have not filed official reports on these incidents as they do not trust the Colombian Army.

CASE 66

THREAT

Victim: José Ángel Rivera, of the Christ the Center Church

Date: June 2008

Location: Colombia, Huila

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

José Ángel was on his way home from church when an alleged FARC militia member approached him. He gave José Ángel a message from his superiors, indicating that if he failed to work with the guerril-

las he would have “serious problems”. This area has long had a guerrilla and Colombian Army presence. The FARC accuses church members of being government informants and has threatened them. The harassment has increased since the murder of Joel Cruz García and Humberto Mendez, pastors in Colombia, Huila, on July 5, 2007 (Cases 15 and 16, PC3).

CASE 67

THREAT

Victim: Adalberto Gálvez

Date: June 2, 2008

Location: Cimitarra, Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Adalberto Gálvez, a 20-year-old with a drug addiction, was on a hit list drafted by alleged Águilas Negras paramilitaries. They threatened to kill addicts during a social cleansing campaign.

CASE 68

THREAT

Victim: Bebedó, Medio San Juan Mennonite Brethren Community

Date: September 2008

Location: Medio San Juan, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

The Bebedó, Medio San Juan Mennonite Brethren church community consists of approximately 30

families. Alleged paramilitaries went to the church and demanded families grow coca and sell it to them. “There will be consequences if you refuse,” they told the families.

CASE 69

THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victim: Pastor Reinaldo Garcés*

Date: October 2008

Location: Palmira, Valle

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Pastor Reinaldo* was running for City Council when armed, self-identified FARC guerrillas threatened him. They approached Reinaldo* while he was in his car. They told him to give them his car as well as medicine. Reinaldo* gave them the car but took the car keys and began praying. When the guerrillas realized that he still had the keys, they got out of the car. They stole his cell phone and money then rode off on their motorcycle. On three other occasions during that month they demanded he give them money and medicine.

CASE 70

THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victims: Pastor Mariano*, Pastor Graciela*, Pastor Rubén* and young adults of Buenaventura's Purpose Driven Life Church of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: October 4, 2008

Location: Buenaventura, Valle

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Three alleged paramilitaries entered the church during a youth service. According to a victim, "three young men, armed with sawed off shotguns insulted us. They said they were from Buenaventura's AUC (paramilitaries). They then asked us for everything of value that we had on us—jewelry, cell phones and money. They asked one young man for his new sneakers and \$50,000 pesos and others for their personal belongings. It was scary. The only adults there were the pastors." This church was also damaged by a bomb detonated nearby (Case 74). The FARC, AUC and demobilized paramilitaries are all present in the area.

CASE 71

THREAT

Victim: The Church of God's Love*

Date: October 2008

Location: Cauca

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

The church pastor reported that alleged guerrillas threatened him and forced him to march against the Colombian Government. He said that, "If we did not go out to march, they fined us \$500,000 pesos. They would not let us work and got mad at us because we did not march. They said that if we did not join them, we would have to leave."

CASE 72

THREAT

Victims: Leyda Sandoval Perilla and Diego Armando Sandoval Perilla, of the Mennonite Church

Date: October 31, 2008

Location: Bogotá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Thirty-three-year-old Leyda Sandoval Perilla is a widow and mother of two daughters. She worked in a beauty shop and volunteered with her church's food program. Alleged guerrillas threatened Leyda (Case 79, PC3) and harassed her husband. Additionally, alleged members of the FARC's 55th Front sent two letters to her church in June and July ordering her and two relatives to attend a meeting in Cabrera,

Cundinamarca. They were later put on a hit list. On October 31, as Leyda and her nephew were waiting in a check-out line at a store, a man in his early twenties shot and killed a man next to them. Leyda and her nephew believe that the attack was actually meant for them because when the armed man got into a waiting taxi he said, “I killed the wrong one.”

CASE 73

THREAT

Victims: Eliana Betancur, Rubén Hincapié, Ana Rengifo and Eliana’s two grandchildren, of the Inter-American Church of Colombia

Date: November 1, 2008

Location: Cartagena, Bolívar

Alleged Perpetrator: Colombian Government

Eliana is a 68-year-old displaced woman who was officially recognized as such in 2005. She cares for four people, including two children and her husband, Rubén Hincapié. Rubén is also 68 years old and is disabled due to trauma suffered during their forced displacement (Case 75). The family was threatened by social service government officials, apparently because Eliana refused to desist in demanding her rights as a displaced person.

The Social Aid Agency (Acción Social), the government entity responsible for aid to the displaced, did not respond to her requests for assistance, and so Eliana filed a case in court against the agency. The judge ruled in her favor on January 14, 2008.

Following this ruling, she was threatened by an official with the Social Aid Agency (Acción Social) emergency assistance program for the displaced in Bolívar province. The staff member denied her aid, verbally abused her and said they doubted her story. According to others, this government official “mistreated the majority of the displaced people in Cartagena” and threatened to report them to the Attorney General’s office and have them arrested. In light of this situation, Eliana filed a grievance claim which she won. In November 2008, a Social Aid Agency lawyer informed her that she would receive the permanent assistance if she withdrew the grievance. Eliana refused and continued her struggle.

ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

CASE 74

ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victim: The Purpose Driven Life Church, of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: June 10, 2008

Location: Buenaventura, Valle

Alleged Perpetrators: Combatants

Members of an armed group detonated an explosive device 15 meters from the Purpose Driven Life Church (IUMEC). The explosion damaged the

building. The resulting fear and anxiety led to a decrease in church attendance.

Miguel Andrés, the son of one of the pastors, reported the details of the incident.

The bomb blast was so strong that the top of a door blew off. It flew past me, just scraping my face... I saw a truck on fire about 30 meters from the building... Then, just moments later, there was a report of another bomb. We went into the house and when we came out, five minutes later, fighting broke out between the Army and an armed group nearby. We went back inside to hide. After that, things settled down a bit and we were able to take a minute to survey the damage, including broken windows and doors, not to mention the damage to neighboring houses.

Rumors suggested the bomb was used to distract the police or the Army so that drugs could be run out of the port. Others said it was related to the arrival of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe the following week.

CASES PRIOR TO 2008

2004 - 2005

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

CASE 75

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Eliana Betancur and Rubén Hincapié, of the Colombian Inter-American Church

Date: January 2005

Location: San Jacinto del Cauca, Bolívar

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Eliana lived with her husband, Rubén, on a farm in San Jacinto. After four years of threats and harassment by alleged paramilitaries, they were forcibly displaced. Beginning in 2001, they were harassed by paramilitaries from the La Mojana Front, led by Éder Pedraza Peña, known as “Ramón Mojana.” The first time the paramilitaries went to the farm they insulted and beat Rubén, telling him he had two weeks to flee because the farm was strategically located. In 2002, after fighting between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries, paramilitaries killed 17 of 150 cattle on a neighboring farm. The owner was forced to flee when the paramilitaries took it

for use as a base. Locals state that paramilitaries killed hundreds of people there. The situation worsened and Eliana and her family were forced to flee in 2005. Rubén became severely depressed by the threats and loss of their land. This led to emotional instability and memory loss. As a result, he was bedridden and disabled. The family was thrust into economic duress.

Community members affirm that “Ramón Mojana” was responsible for hundreds of murders, massacres and disappearances between 2000 and 2006. “Ramón Mojana” terrorized the region, claiming that it was a guerrilla stronghold thanks to the support of the civilian population. With a list in hand, he would track down and murder entire families. Between 2001 and 2006, he forced farmers to plant crops for him, paying them as he pleased and threatening to kill them if they didn’t sell their crops to him. Around this same time he forced farmers to grow coca in the mountainous region and sell it to him.

2006

HOMICIDE

CASE 76

HOMICIDE

THREAT

Victim: Albeiro Centeno*, of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: November 2, 2006

Location: Vigía del Fuerte, Antioquia

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Albeiro*, a 49-year-old Afrocolombian farmer, worked as an elementary school teacher and principal. He was also a church leader and president of the Community Council. According to the testimonies of locals, alleged guerrillas from the FARC’s 34th Front, under the command of “Amparo”, took Albeiro* to speak to a guerrilla commander. On the way there, they tied him up and killed him with a machete. A month prior he had received death threats from the FARC. Residents from the area affirm that between 1996 and 2006, 13 people were killed in the area.

CASE 77

HOMICIDE

Victim: Miguel Ángel Salazar, Pastor of the Evangelical Missionary Union Church of Colombia (IUMEC)

Date: November 2006

Location: Unguía, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Miguel lived with his wife Zoila and their four children. Alleged paramilitaries murdered, decapitated and quartered him. His family was later displaced (Case 35).

HOMICIDE

CASE 78

HOMICIDE TORTURE

Victim: Leonidas Méndez*, of the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC)

Date: March 2007

Location: Río Sucio, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

Leonidas Méndez*, a 45-year-old logger, lived with his wife and their children of eight, 12, 16 and 19 years of age.

Leonidas* and other local men sold wood to lumberyards in Turbo. A group of alleged guerrillas

announced that no one could sell anymore lumber without their permission. But some continued in spite of the orders due to financial need. The majority of them were later murdered, including Leonidas*, who was burned alive and had his testicles cut off. His eldest son was later killed by paramilitaries (Case 7).

CASE 79

HOMICIDE KIDNAPPING THREAT

Victims: Henry Cárdenas Lizcano and Celmira Contreras Mejía, of the Global Missionary Movement Church

Date: June 7, 2007

Location: Cúcuta, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Henry, an automobile parts salesman, lived with his wife, Celmira, and their three children. Alleged paramilitaries kidnapped him on June 5, 2007. Three days later, as Celmira filed a complaint with the Attorney General's office, the kidnappers called their 16-year-old daughter, indicating that she should deliver \$3,000,000 pesos³⁹ to a specific destination. On June 7, Henry's nephew delivered the money. On his way, in the town of Aguasal, he saw a body. When he arrived, he was told that Hen-

39 Approximately US\$1,500.

ry had been killed by order of “Camilo.” Two weeks later, a large man with a mustache went to the store where Celmira worked. He identified himself as a paramilitary and threatened to kill her if she testified in court. As of the writing of this report, the family was in financial crisis. In the area where Henry was killed, paramilitaries such as “The Sergeant” and “Carlos” had a strong presence.

CASE 80

HOMICIDE FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Victim: Víctor Julio Niño Torres, of the Adventist Church

Date: June 22, 2007

Location: Tibú, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Twenty-three-year-old Víctor Julio was married to Alba and together they had four children. He worked as a motorized canoe driver. While Victor was in Tibú, he was held and then assassinated by alleged paramilitaries from the Catatumbo Bloc in an area known as Palo Quemao, just outside of Tibú. The authorities picked up the body on June 23. His motorcycle was stolen by his assassins. Alba and their children were later displaced (Case 86).

CASE 81

HOMICIDE

Victim: Julio Parea

Date: September 2007

Location: Istmina, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Julio was married and served as a community leader who spoke out on behalf of the community to armed actors who caused problems in the area. He was murdered and quartered by alleged paramilitaries.

CASE 82

DEATH DUE TO ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE INJURY

Victims: Jorge Olarte, Adrián Jiménez*, Agustín López* and Alberto Martínez*, of the Mennonite Brethren Church

Date: May 2007

Location: Istmina, Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Guerrillas

Nineteen-year-old Jorge was the brother of the Mennonite Brethren Church pastor in Boca de Suruco, Chocó. Jorge found a grenade on a riverbank and, without knowing what it was, took it into town. He accidentally dropped it and the grenade detonated, killing him, a baby and the baby’s father. The

blast also seriously injured another member of the church. The community believes that the grenade belonged to the guerrillas.

INJURY

CASE 83

INJURY

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE COLLECTIVE THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Victims: Rosa Pérez* and Darío Pérez*, of the United Pentecostal Church of Colombia

Date: May 2007

Location: San Vicente Del Caguán, Caquetá

Alleged Perpetrator: FARC

Rosa*, a six-year-old student, was playing with her brother, Darío*, and another brother in their backyard when an explosive detonated. Darío's* chest and left lung were injured and Rosa's* right leg was broken. Community members believe that FARC guerrillas mined the farm where Rosa* and Darío* lived as a retaliation against their father, who had secretly organized a prayer meeting in their home. The FARC prohibited Pentecostal worship services in the province of Caquetá, threatening anyone who disobeyed with death or displacement.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

CASE 84

SEXUAL VIOLENCE FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Martha Perdomo and her four children: Aldo Núñez*, Alejandro*, Aida* and Alfonso*

Date: January 2007

Location: Mapiripán, Meta

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Twenty-six-year-old Martha has four children, ages two, four, nine and 12. They were forcibly displaced due to abuses at the hands of an alleged paramilitary. He later threatened her. This is Martha's story:

Unfortunately I have had to live through some very hard things. I lived with a man for 12 years, putting up with every kind of humiliation, including rape and physical as well as verbal abuse. But, out of love for my children, fear and many other things, I put up with it until I learned that he did not work where he had told me, but rather worked for the Águilas Negras in Mapiripán. I was so scared to learn that he would not hesitate to threaten, kill or do whatever he wanted to whoever they told him to. That is why I put up with everything he did to me. The worst part of this for me was allowing his male lover to sleep in our bed with us. He was a bisexual. I still have not been able to ease the pain in my heart.

I had to leave the house that I was paying off through my hard work as well as a small piece of land. I fled with only the clothes on my back a year ago. But now he has found my cell phone number and he threatened me again, saying that if he finds me, he will kill me. I went to the Attorney General's office and filed a complaint and I am hoping for help. I am registered as a displaced person, but I still have not received any assistance from the government. This is very difficult. What scares me the most is that anyone can call the Mayor's office and get any information they ask for. I found out that he called and said he was my husband and they gave him my cell phone number. I don't know what to do.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

CASE 85

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: José Miguel Rojas, Maira Lemus and their three children: Camila*, Andrés* and Jacinto*

Date: February 20, 2007

Location: Bajo Baudó (Pizarro), Chocó

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Thirty-two-year-old José Miguel and his wife Maira Lemus, 28, are farmers with three children, ages five, seven and nine. Alleged paramilitaries arrived to the area in December 2006 to investigate fami-

lies that supposedly were guerrilla collaborators. A woman who was close to the paramilitaries told José that he was on the list to be killed. In the early morning hours of February 20 he and his family fled. They were fortunate as many did not escape the killing spree that later ensued.

CASE 86

FORCED DISPLACEMENT THREAT

Victims: Alba Nidia Guevara Ordóñez and her four children: Alfredo Ruiz*, Álvaro*, Amós* and Antonio*

Date: July 2007

Location: Tibú, Norte de Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Alba Nidia had four children between three and 11 years of age. Her partner, Victor, was murdered by alleged paramilitaries (Case 80). She left for La Gabarra with her three-year-old son, hoping to pick up some personal belongings, sell the motorized canoe that her husband drove and then move to Cúcuta. At a roadblock in Vetás, alleged paramilitaries from the Catatumbo Bloc under the command of "Camilo" asked her for her identification. When they realized that she was Victor's wife, they threatened her and told her to turn around and leave the canoe. She had no choice but to obey their orders, so she lost the canoe, its outboard motor and the family's other valuables.

THREAT

CASE 87

THREAT ILLEGAL MEANS AND METHODS OF WAR- FARE

Victims: Pastor Israel Martínez, Albeiro Romero, Teódulo Ojeda and Marcos Grimaldos, of the Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church

Date: January 2007

Location: Girón, Santander

Alleged Perpetrator: Paramilitaries

Thirty-two-year-old Albeiro is married and has a five-year-old daughter. He was in the church's truck at around 5:00 p.m., along with Teódulo Ojeda, 78, and Marcos Grimaldos, 38, when armed Águilas Negras paramilitaries stopped them. They forced them into the bushes and stole the truck. Pastor Israel and his pastoral team had been threatened by this same group just after they bought the truck and built a meeting room and children's cafeteria at the church. A report on the robbery was filed with the Attorney General's office, but the case did not move forward. The authorities indicated that the truck could possibly be in the Magdalena Medio region, but that they could not go there unless a Colombian Army battalion went with them.





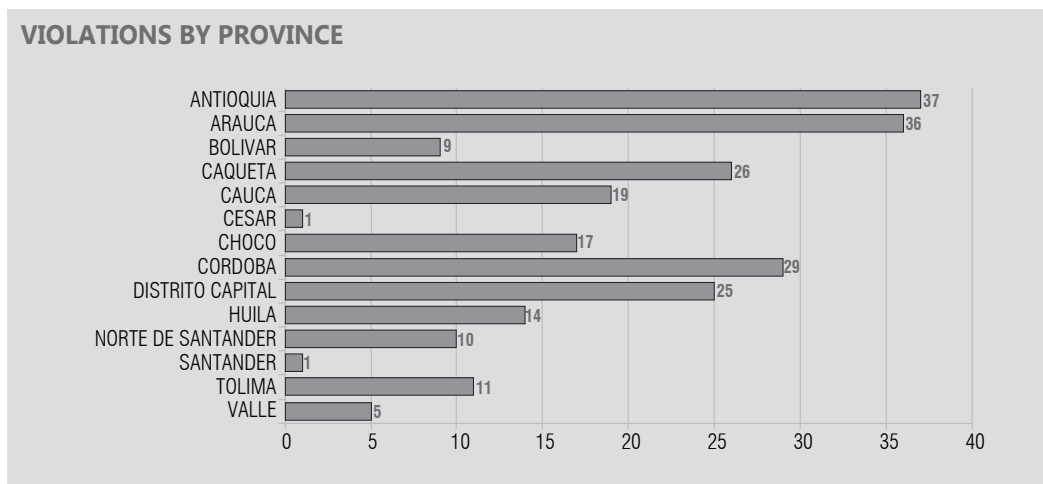
Desaparecidos #5, graphite on paper by Daniel Esquivia Zapata

Chapter 3.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Introduction

In 2008, Justapaz and the Peace Commission of CEDECOL documented political violence revealing 240 individual violations suffered by 158 individual church victims. In addition, trained program members recorded 31 collective violations against communities for a total of 2,285 victims during that period.



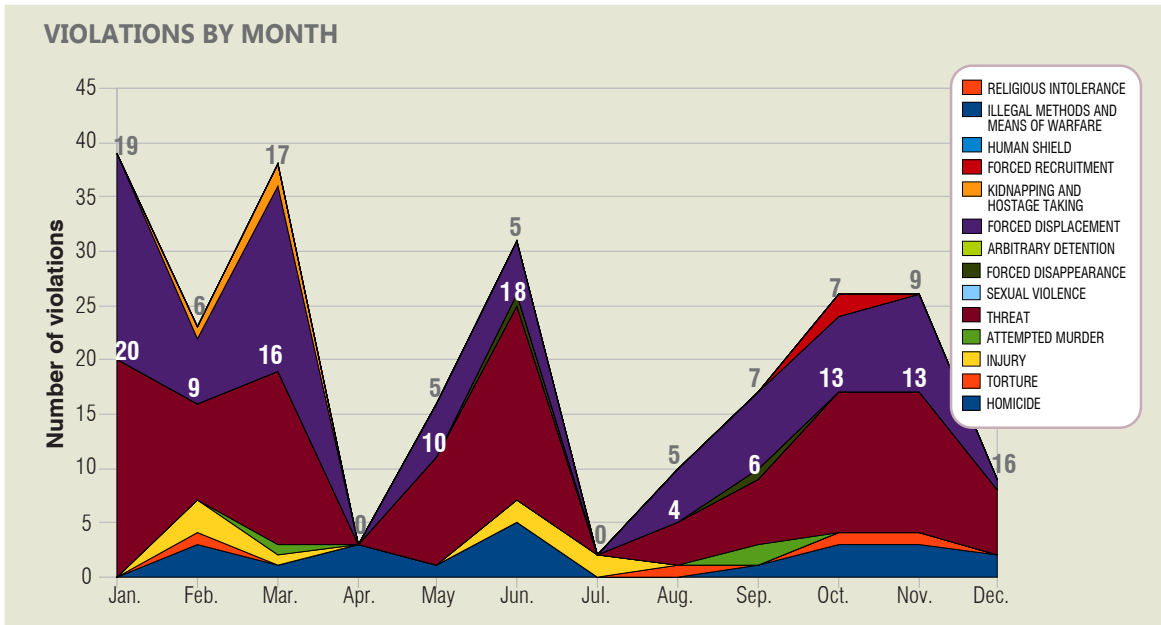
Collective violations

In this report we include information on collective violations, noting that the number of victims in such cases must be approximated.⁴⁰ It is challenging to precisely document the number of victims and details in such cases due to the nature of the violations and the limitations of our documentation teams. In order to calculate the number of victims in cases in which we do not have precise information about the size of the family or church,⁴¹ we estimate three people per family and 30 people per church. The following is a summary of the cases of collective violations and the approximate number of victims:

- Case 4 Doncello Council members | 5
- Case 19 Families from Murmullo Medio | 100
- Case 29 Berrecui Church Community | 30
- Case 29 Pastor Pedro Mosquera's Family | 5
- Case 37 Azaél Hernández's Relatives | 35
- Case 38 Thirty Church Families Living Along the Suruco River | 100
- Case 40 500 Families | 1500
- Case 42 Individuals from the Community of Displaced Persons | 20
- Case 48 Antonio Alberto Mosquera Borja's Family | 5
- Case 51 Sandoval Family | 5
- Case 52 Alberto Ramírez* and Lady Maria González's* Relatives | 50
- Case 55 IUMEC Church | 30
- Case 56 Santa María (Darién) AIEC Church | 30
- Case 60 Churches in *Comuna* Neighborhoods 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 and 13 of Medellín | 180
- Case 68 Bebedó, Medio San Juan Mennonite Brethren Church Community | 120
- Case 71 Indigenous Church in Cauca | 50
- Case 70 Young Adults from the Buenaventura IUMEC Church | 20

40 Deviating from our methodology in previous reports, here we broaden our definition of victims to include collective victims. This new perspective was the product of a theological and political reflection on the individualistic orientation of the conceptual framework of the first generation of human rights.

41 In certain cases we do have precise information and do not use an estimate of three to calculate the number of victims.



Collective displacements.

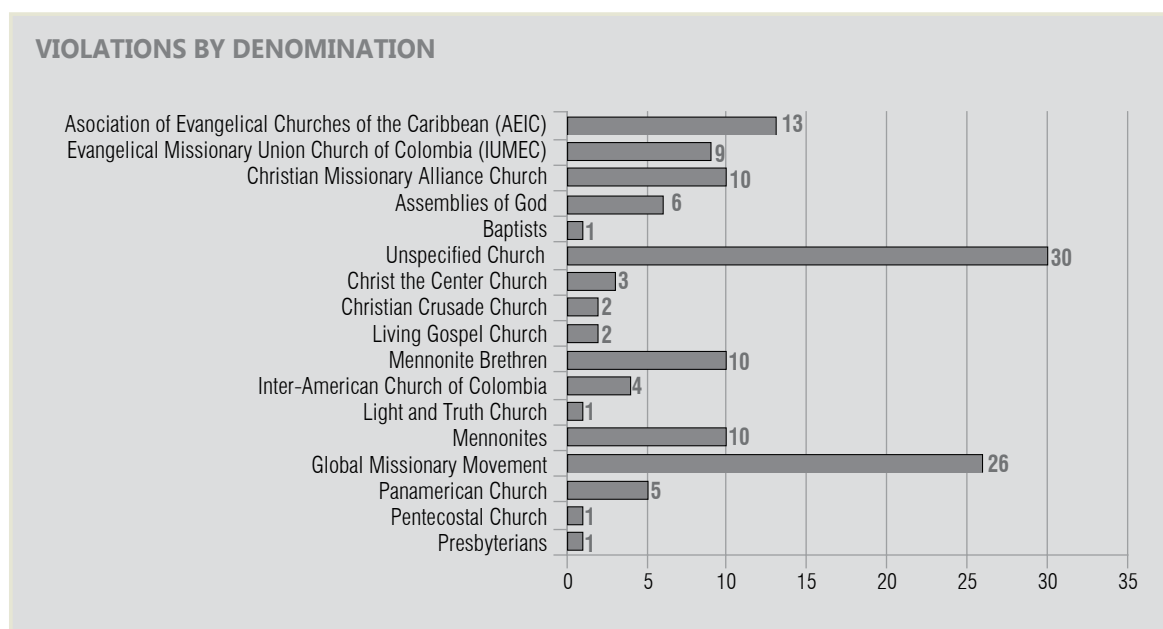
The cases of displacement documented, with estimated figures, are:

Month	Number of People	Alleged Perpetrator	Case
February	35	Paramilitaries	Case 37
February	100	Paramilitaries	Case 38
March	25	FARC	Case 42
March	1500	Responsibility shared by Colombian Army and FARC	Case 40 and 41
June	100	Paramilitaries	Case 19
September	5	Paramilitaries	Case 48
September	5	Paramilitaries	Case 68
October	5	FARC	Case 51
November	50	FARC	Case 52

A total of approximately 1825 Christians or individuals close to churches were forcibly displaced in 2008.

Violation distribution by denomination

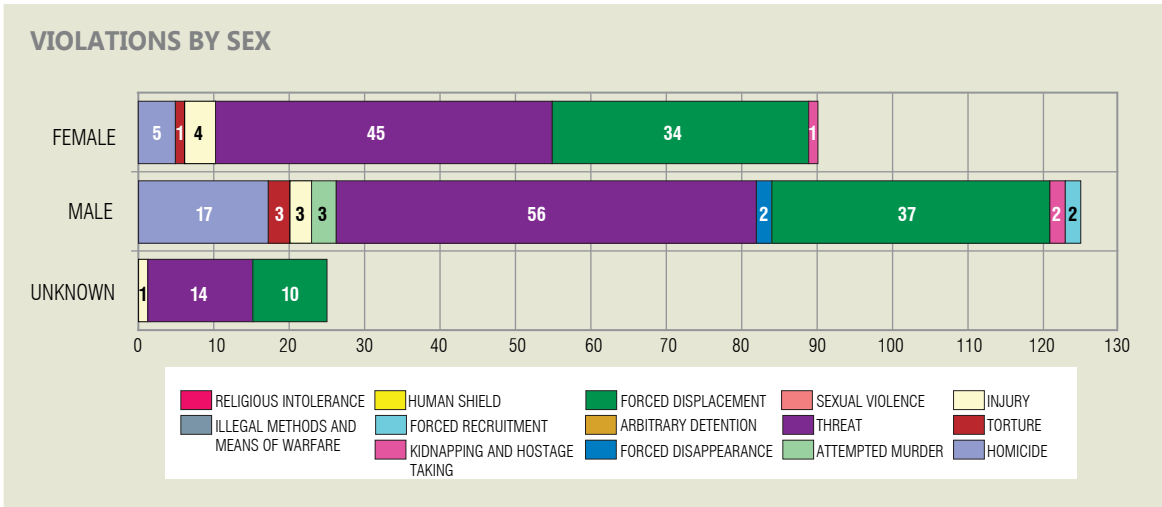
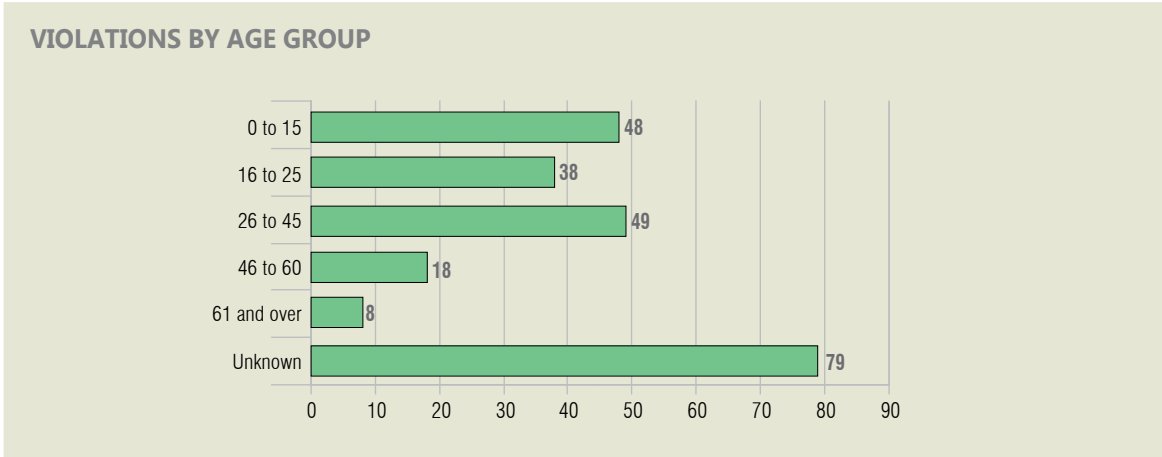
The denominations in which the most violations against individuals were documented were the Global Missionary Movement Church (26), the Association of Evangelical Churches of the Caribbean (AIEC) (13), the Mennonite Brethren (10), the Mennonite Church (10), and the Christian Missionary Alliance Church (10). The church most impacted by collective displacement was the AIEC's New Light Church.



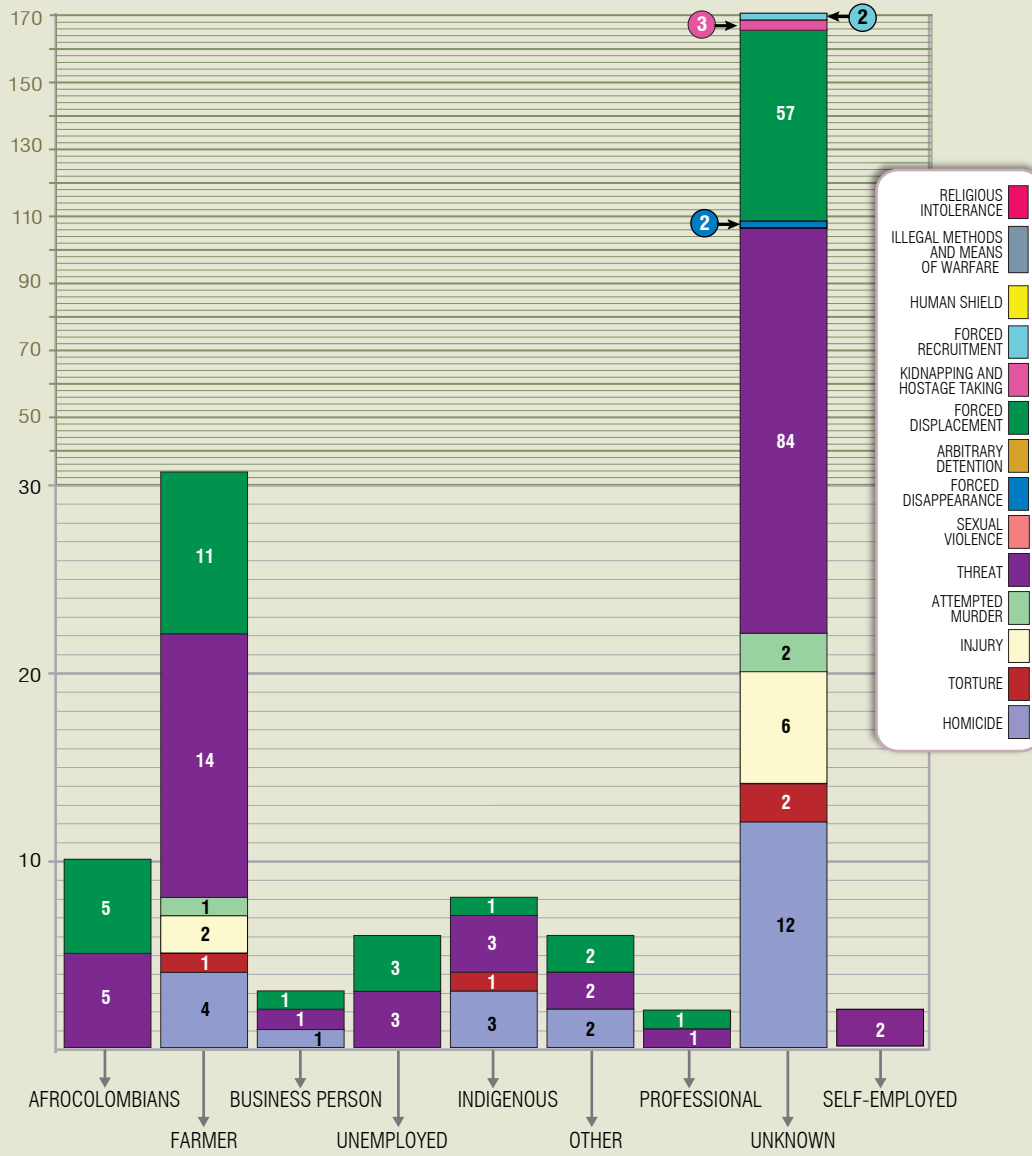
Demographics of the victims

Of the violations documented, 33 correspond to the farmer (*campesino*) sector, 10 to Afrocolombians and eight to the indigenous. In the remaining violations, the victims did not identify themselves in association with a specific social group.

As in the past two years, the age groups with the highest rate of violations were young adults (26-45), with 20 percent of the violations, and children (0-15), also with 20 percent of the violations. Of the 240 violations documented, 90 were perpetrated against women and 125 against men and in 25 cases the gender was unspecified. In nearly 20 percent of the violent incidents (42 violations), the victim had at least one child.

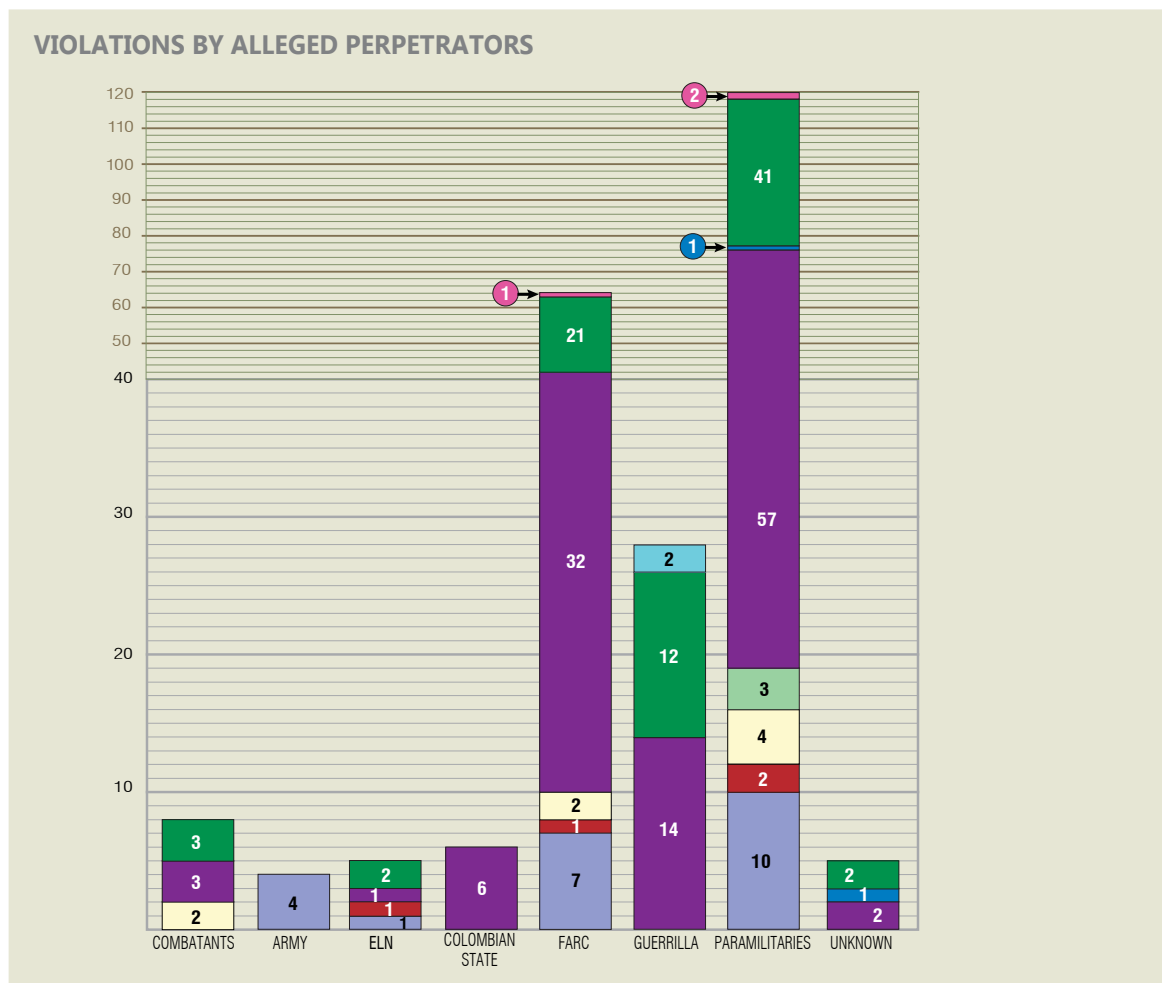


VIOLATIONS BY SOCIAL GROUP



Alleged perpetrators

Of the 240 violations documented in 2008, paramilitaries allegedly committed 120; guerrilla groups, 97 and the Colombian Government, 10.⁴² In terms of collective violations, the paramilitaries allegedly committed 15; guerrilla groups, 11 and the Colombian Army, 5.



42 In 13 cases there was no attribution.

Violations

The most common individual violation was a threat (115), followed by forced displacement (81) and homicide (22). We also documented eight injuries, four tortures, three attempted murders, three kidnappings, two forced disappearances and two incidents of recruitment of children.

The most common collective violation was a threat, with 18 such cases documented, followed by 10 cases of forced displacement. In many cases threats led to displacements.

Note: some victims suffered multiple types of violations and therefore are included in multiple totals.

Homicides. In 2008 we documented 22 homicides.⁴³

- Four executions by alleged members of government security forces, compared with two in both 2007 and 2006.
- Ten murders allegedly committed by paramilitaries in 2008 compared with nine in 2007.
- Eight murders allegedly committed by guerrillas in 2008 compared with 11 in 2007.

Use of Landmines. In 2008 we document seven cases in which landmines were used:

- Three cases attributed to the FARC (Cases 17, 22 and 55).
- Two cases attributed to paramilitaries (Cases 23 and 21).

43 In the documentation of homicides, we have adopted the conventions used by other documentation programs. We refer to homicides committed by the government as extrajudicial executions or executions whereas homicides committed by non-State actors are termed killings or murders. This distinction attempts to recognize the legal framework that regulates the actions of the government, but in no way attempts to give greater or lesser significance to one death over another. Each equally destroys human lives and we condemn them all.

- Two cases without definitive attribution (Cases 25 and 17).

Abuse. We documented four cases of insufficient care, humiliating treatment and threats against displaced people who requested official displaced person status or who requested assistance from Acción Social—the government entity responsible for aid to the displaced (Cases 58, 59, 73 and 28). Case 28 from Córdoba describes how Manuel Narciso Díaz Segura survived an attempted murder carried out by alleged paramilitaries, yet officials from Acción Social claimed that there were no public security problems or displacements in the area where Mr. Díaz Segura was attacked.



Chapter 4.

SEEDS OF HOPE

Churches must stake out a vision and distinctive values which are sufficiently different to wake a sleeping people and demonstrate that what we are consuming and living is a lie. We only feel the full damage of lies when we live in truth once again.

Multiple forms of violence may lead us to believe that our dreams of a different society are dead. Many believe that anything goes in this “dog eat dog world”—but some churches are rebuilding the dream. They seek fertile soil in which to sow seeds of hope. Peace churches understand that you have to sow that which is essential to life and think about what nourishes the future instead of trusting in misleading quick fixes and lies. Churches must stake out a vision and distinctive values which are different enough to wake a sleeping people and demonstrate that we are consuming and living lies.

We only feel the damage of these lies when we once again begin to live in truth. Seeds are dead, but they contain life. Fertile land can awaken life where it appears to be dead. Like wise, the dreams are not dead; they are only dormant. We must overcome lies that tell us otherwise. In fertile soil dreams can be resurrected and sprout new life.

—Excerpt from a church community reflection

Seed of Hope 1

Weaving a new history

“We are writing a new history, not one of kidnapping, slavery, misery and death, but of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace.”

Vibrant colors, a design that tricks the eye into seeing movement, and the sheer size of the quilted tapestry draw the onlooker into the scene. Smiling broadly, she eagerly steps forward to study the depiction of an Afrocolombian community event unfolding amidst rolling green hills beneath the intense midday sun. But the aesthetic beauty has deceived her. She gasps and her face crumbles.

Appliquéd corpses lie in pools of blood. Soldiers in camouflage are stabbing men. Another figure appears to toss a flailing child. Women and girls flee with large bags perched on their heads. A woman is gang raped. Another gives birth in the middle of the street while being clubbed. And so the horrific chaos of massacre continues to unfurl.

This is the autobiography of displaced women residents of Montes de Maria, an economically impoverished and conflictive area in the department of Sucre along Colombia’s northern coast. “Weaving Dreams,” the organization composed of displaced churchwomen from the municipality of Maria la Baja, is one of the Associations of Dignified Life and Solidarity (ASVIDAS)⁴⁴ along the northern coast.

One of the founding members writes:

Narrating our histories on cloth is therapeutic. We are sharing our stories of displacement and death at the hands of the armed groups in the Montes de Maria.

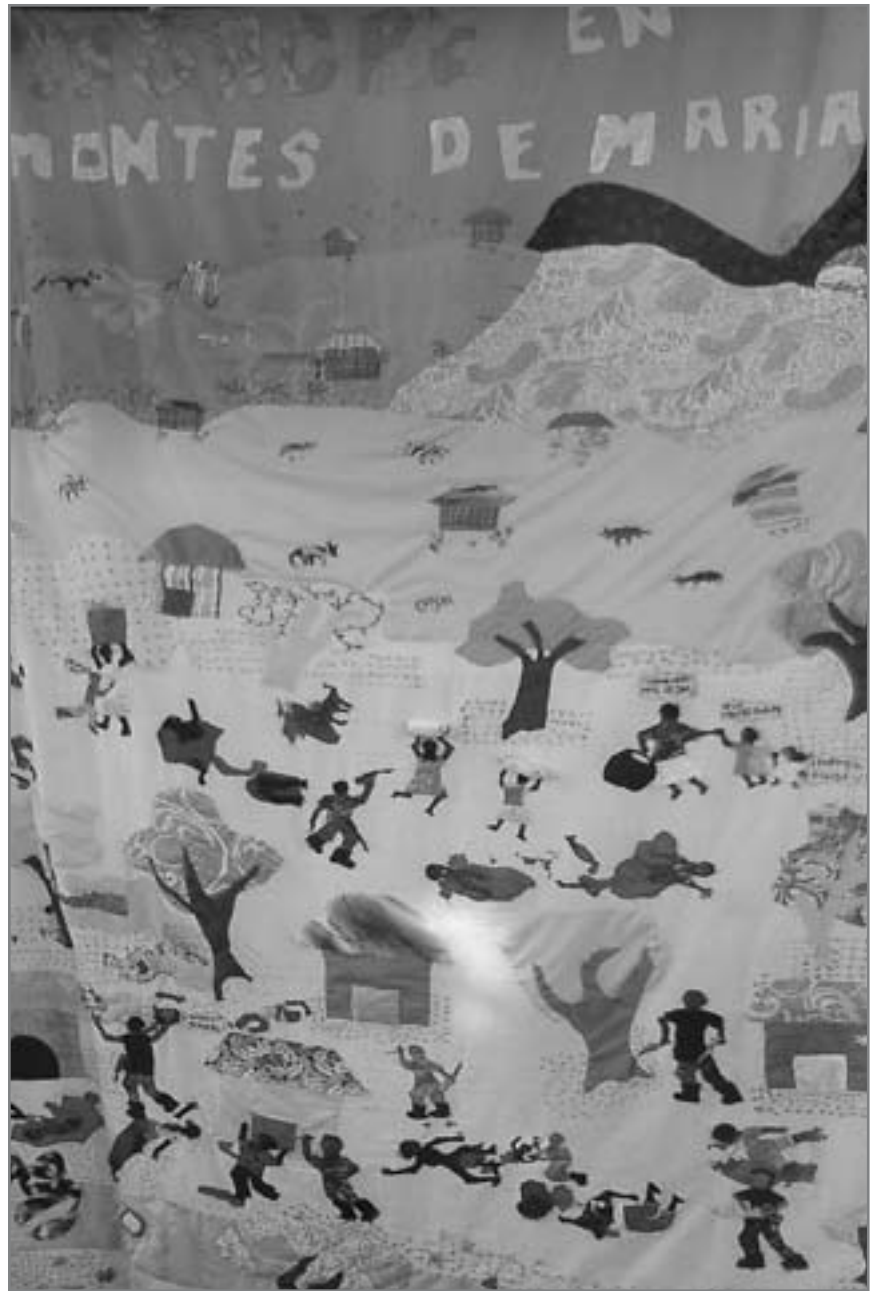
We Afrocolombian displaced women are three-times vulnerable. We are vulnerable because we are women, because we are Afrocolombian and because we have been displaced. This is why we raise our voice.

44 See Prophetic Call, Report 4 for a fuller description of the Associations of Dignified Life and Solidarity (ASVIDAS).

Just like our African ancestors we suffered massive displacement from our lands and racial discrimination. Ever since March 10th, 2000 fear and insecurity have been sown in our hearts; our town (Mampujan) that used to smell like coffee and coconut rice now smells of desolation, fear and sadness. Oh God, how can we forget that when we had no money for food our children easily climbed fruit trees, we caught fish with our nets, or we caught rabbits and found wild potatoes were we lived!

After we were forced from our homes we began to suffer unemployment, hunger, scarcity, desperation, and domestic and community violence. We needed to sustain our families and we needed healing.

These strong women organized.



Narratives through quilts provided one outlet. The women began to work with appliqué tapestries as a form of art therapy in 2006. Early on they discovered that art provides a medium to “commemorate suffering” that also “frees”. As they externalized their stories, others took note. A Bogotá based foundation now provides employment for 15 women through purchasing the wall hangings for museum display. This is a therapeutic experiment—no one knows with certainty what repeatedly narrating their stories on the tapestries will do for the community process.



Eight years after their displacement, they are telling their stories of suffering and resilience in the news, both print and TV.

Traditional Afrocolombian foods helped make the early quilting gatherings into spirited celebrations. A participant affirms, “The trauma healing lifted women’s self-esteem. Experts in Afrocolombian cooking now dared to sell traditional foods on the streets and enter food fairs, so they contributed to household income.”

Their cooking was “discovered”. Now women from the Montes de Maria are also nationally recognized for culinary achievements and as well as their art. One of the “Dream Weavers” was invited to participate in a culinary event in Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, and was then featured in the city paper. The women have already published one cookbook and are working on a second.

The women’s creativity and energy has not been lost on the rest of the community and neighboring villages. Their youth collect fruit and grow vegetables that they cook over bonfires to make jams, candies and preserves to sell. The community elders share ancestral wisdom about medicinal plants that are also sold.

The women from ASVIDAS Weaving Dreams are going to other towns victimized by the armed conflict and replicating the therapy of narrating stories through tapestries through women's sowing circles, they gain access to conflictive areas tightly controlled by warring armies.

How do the women summarize their development?

Counting on little government support allows us to be strategic and survive without being dependent. We rise up and triumph in spite of displacement. We rise up in spite of the death of family members and pain... We have learned the value of friendship and forgiveness... Today we hope for truth, justice and an end to the acts of violence we have suffered. We are weaving a new history, we are rising up!

Seed of Hope 2

The irrefutable vocation of the church

Being peacemakers is the irrefutable vocation of the church as the living example of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

In February 2006 more than 110 churches and Christian organizations participated in a National Summit of Evangelical Christian Churches for Peace in Colombia. In their declaration they named several cornerstone duties of churches in peace building. One of the points affirmed:

We applaud all efforts for dialogue among the groups in conflict and the Colombian government and, especially, the laying down of weapons by people or armed groups to achieve peace, justice and dignity. We encourage those groups already engaged in such processes, the ELN and the AUC, to move forward with sincerity and a genuine desire to build a lasting peace in Colombia. We also invite the FARC, as well as the other armed groups and the government, to heed the civilian population's call to put an end to the armed conflict so that we might work together to build a lasting peace. This will help us end the violence endured by our impoverished and suffering people. A first step towards dialogue would be the definition of a humanitarian agreement that frees those who have been kidnapped. It is necessary to

*move towards building a democratic and participatory society characterized by inclusiveness (including all parties to the armed conflict), where we can live without fear of armed coercion.*⁴⁵

This position statement was taken up by the Mennonite Church of Colombia (IMCOL) in 2008 when it began discerning the role of churches in fostering dialogue between the warring parties. This position stems from earlier experiences in which Mennonite representatives joined in an ecumenical effort of the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace (now Peace Commission) of CEDECOL. This effort led to dialogue with the FARC⁴⁶, the ELN⁴⁷, the AUC and with members of the Colombian Armed Forces.

Although past dialogues took place in the context of formal negotiation processes involving armed parties and sectors of civil society, today such government-sanctioned opportunities do not exist. According to the June 2005 directive released by the Presidential High Commissioner for Peace, the only persons authorized to contact and suggest possibilities for dialogue with the illegal armed groups are the President, the Administration-appointed High Commissioner for Peace and a few Catholic Church leaders.⁴⁸ Since the insurgent groups have not accepted these intermediaries, there are currently no peace dialogues between the parties to the conflict in Colombia today. The gap between the warring parties is actually widening due to the regular exchange of military and verbal assaults – with the unarmed civilian population caught in the middle.

The suffering the Colombian people continue to endure has led the Mennonite Church to reaffirm the need to build bridges to facilitate conversations between the Administration and the guerrilla in particular, given that there have been no significant contacts between these parties.

45 National Summit of Evangelical Christian churches for Peace in Colombia, the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace, Justapaz. February 2006. San Andrés Islands

46 Dialogue with the FARC took place in the demilitarized zone (Zona de Despeje) in the context of the Pastrana Administration's negotiations with the FARC.

47 Dialogue with the ELN occurred during rounds of negotiation between the ELN and the Colombian government. Select civil society representatives were invited to participate. Further dialogues happened within the context of the government approved ELN Peace House (Casa de Paz).

48 "LINEAMIENTOS PARA EL ENFOQUE DE LOS PROYECTOS DE COOPERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL. Alto Comisionado para la Paz. Presidencia de la Republica." http://www.altocomisionadopalapaz.gov.co/noticias/2005/junio/jun_13_05a.htm viewed jun 3.

As a part of the body of Christ, Colombian Mennonites know the trail of blood. They are in close relationship with pained victims and have spoken with war-weary perpetrators. But they also know the Holy Spirit's uplifting power and that those who work for peace, love their enemies and give food to the hungry are blessed.

In light of this situation and given the biblical call to reconciliation,⁴⁹ the Colombian Mennonite Church has considered that now is the time to move forward in building bridges between the armed groups, the Government and civil society to help dissolve mistrust, bridges that can lead to future dialogues. One pastor affirmed, "building bridges for dialogue is not easy or quick. But it is what we must do."

Through community discernment the IMCOL reaffirmed that peacemaking is the irrefutable vocation of the church, in spite of risk. In 2008 the IMCOL members shared the proposal of continuing with the "parallel track", or bridge building for peace dialogues, with the church's National Assembly. An overwhelming majority supported the effort despite the risk it entails for the denomination. One Mennonite pastor stated:

We don't depend on the government to give us permission to enter into conversations because it is our duty as peacemakers, as church. The center of the gospel is peace. If God had not decided to make peace with God's enemies, there would be no good news. This is the essence of the good news: even though we are sinners, Christ died for us and made peace. This forgiveness reconciled us with God.

The IMCOL reaffirmed bridge building to facilitate conversations between the government and the guerrilla in particular due to the dearth of contact between the two during President Uribe's administration.

The IMCOL believes that the church's vocation for peace cannot be muzzled by the dynamic of the armed conflict. Nor should it be blunted by the risks incurred. The vocation given to the church by the Holy Spirit is the essence of Jesus' gospel. The gospel compels Christ's followers to pick themselves up in the midst of pain and grief to give strength and hope to those who are bound by the shackles of war. The gospel calls for the

49 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (New International Version)

laying down of weapons by all parties to the conflict. It calls for the repentance and transformation of people and structures and for perpetrators of violence to repay the damage done.

“Our church is simply being coherent with its teaching and peacemaking vocation. As followers of Jesus we seek to proclaim and live the gospel of peace, so this is not out of character or out of the ordinary. It’s just another way in which we need to act,” concluded a local pastor.

Seed of Hope 3

Land for the dispossessed

In the midst of territorial conflict, a rural congregation secures land for war victims. It discovers its vocation along the way.

Southern Córdoba

“The situation became critical in 2002. The victims desperately needed alternatives,” stated a church leader. Families fled down the mountain and arrived to the church doors in Montelíbano, Córdoba. There was a lot of killing and numerous paramilitary massacres in this northeastern part of the country during this time. Alternatives to a fate of landless impoverishment appeared impossible for the violently dispossessed, and most congregants did not consider it the church’s task to create any.

A small group within the New Life Church thought otherwise. These members accompanied the war victims and advocated on their behalf as they sensitized their community to the gospel call to tend to the orphan and widow. After watching, listening and debating for three years, the church skeptics also were convicted of the call. In 2005 the full congregation of thirty members formally embraced their vocation of creating alternatives in the midst of armed conflict by organizing an Association for Dignified Life and Solidarity (ASVIDAS).

Armed violence to clear territory. In a conflict where “the goal seems to be to kick farmers off their land,” as one community leader put it, how does a small church located in the backyard of the aggressors secure land for war victims? The New Life Church was determined to help the displaced resettle, but land disputes are

central to the conflict and represent questions of life and death in Colombia. “Here the paramilitary tell you, ‘sell us your land or your widow will give it to us.’ Day by day, the campesinos are left with less and poorer quality land.”

Creating alternatives for landless farmers. In 2005 the New Life ASVIDAS entered a highly competitive national land competition through the Colombian Institute for Rural Development (INCODER). They won. Three years later they learned they had been chosen from among 14,000 competitors. Each of the twenty-nine families included in the proposal is now living on 7.5 hectares of land.

A New Life leader, himself displaced two decades ago, describes the land allocated for the displaced when he says, “The land you settled for is never as good as what you left. The displaced will never get the good land. The best land is for the mega-projects in the area. But we are grateful for what we have.” He smiles broadly.

In 2008 New Life worked with another 100 displaced families, also from Córdoba. After completing a needs assessment survey, they provided home construction kits, farming supplies and food. “The fact that the bridge was still out—after 11 years—was an obstacle. But we coordinated efforts and delivered the construction materials. We also helped them get their farms started with subsistence crops—yucca, plantains and corn.”

Challenges. “We have some frustrations and obstacles to moving forward” one church member comments modestly. In 2008 they entered a second INCODER land competition on behalf of other displaced families, but they have yet to learn the results. “Are these families also going to have to wait three years to resettle? And in the meantime, what do we do?” Their second concern is the fate of their fruit farm. Currently 32 families are growing passion fruit, another project of the New Life ASVIDAS. But they are at risk of losing the rented land.

Coca is grown around Montelíbano, and aerial fumigations devastate the family farms. According to a church leader:

At first, people—and we’re not talking about coca farmers here—reported the damage to their food crops. But nothing came of it and they got discouraged. Now they are saying they are going to fumigate again, and it’s time for the harvest. If they were able to target the coca exclusively, that would be one thing, but they are not precise. The wind carries the poison and food crops that we eat and sell—rice,

yucca, plantains and corn—are destroyed. [The government] says it's not their fault. Maybe they don't control the breeze, but we ask that coca be eradicated manually.

This small church is creating real alternatives for war victims where none appeared possible. Their example speaks volumes: “if it's real, it's possible.”

Seed of Hope 4

The faith community in the streets

The Maicao Christian community comes together to pray for a disappeared pastor's life.

Pastor William Reyes, of Maicao's Inter-American Light and Truth Church, disappeared on September 25, 2008 (Case 20). Nine days later, on October 4, thousands of people joined a march calling for the pastor's safe return.

The march was organized by the Brotherhood of Evangelical Ministers of Maicao (FRAMEM). The event began with hymns and a sermon in the Light and Truth Church, where William pastored. The participants, including children, youth and adults, marched over three kilometers despite temperatures over 100° F, calling for the quick return of Pastor Reyes. The march ended at the Maicao campus of the University of la Guajira where more songs were sung and participants heard a message of faith, hope and the promise of freedom for captives.

Despite the troubling security situation in Maicao, the Christian community was an example of solidarity and gave a compelling testimony of its faith and hope.



Seed of Hope 5

Resilient Women

Modelia neighborhood in Ibagué, Tolima

Due to the scourge of displacement caused by Colombia's violence, in this case in southern Tolima, the Mennonite Church has provided pastoral accompaniment to many displaced families. In 2005, a faith community was founded by women who had been resettled on Guavinal Avenue in the Modelia neighborhood of Ibagué. Modelia is an impoverished part of the city, with many social problems.

In 2007, several social projects were organized to improve the situation of these families. The projects include a food program, a daycare center and a small business. The business, led by seven women, four of whom are victims of the conflict, has become more than just a job. It has become an inspiration, a supportive space where the women can share their experiences. The business makes dolls, sandals, key chains, necklaces and artisan goods made out of seeds and stones. The women also organize a used clothing sale, through which people in the neighborhood buy low-cost clothing for their families.

This is how hope is reborn in the poor neighborhood of Modelia. Luz Amanda Valencia, the community's pastor, says that, "when these women can earn a living that improves their lives and those of their children, we can say that here hope is shining like the sun."

Seed of Hope 6

A community displaced but united

Murmullo Medio in Tierralta, Córdoba

Despite the murder of beloved community leaders, death threats and displacement, the Murmullo Medio community, in southern Córdoba province, has remained united. While many communities under the dominant shadow of armed groups are forced to flee individually and disperse to different locations, the unity of the community, combined with the accompaniment of other faith communities has led to resilience in Murmullo Medio.

In June 2008, Murmullo Medio residents were again forced to leave their lands behind and flee⁵⁰ due to the forced disappearance of key community leaders and death threats issued against 11 others in the community. They fled to Tierralta seeking refuge, protection and consolation after the loss of loved ones, animals, crops and other belongings (Case 37).

50 The first displacement occurred in 1996. They were able to return in 2000, but in 2002 they were forcibly displaced again. In 2005 and 2006, they returned home again. Then in 2008 they were once again forced to flee their land.

Once in Tierralta, they looked to Christ the King Church and the Mayor's office for support. They were temporarily sheltered at San Carlos school. Despite living under difficult conditions due to the displacement, the community remained united.

In October 2008, thanks to support from the Community Social Development Corporation - Association for Dignified Life and Solidarity (CORSOC-ASVIDAS) and Christ the King Church, the community acquired a small plot of land in Nueva Esperanza, Tierralta where they built 30 houses. Today the 30 displaced families from Murmullo Medio are working to overcome their difficult situation of displacement and temporary shelter and are dreaming and developing a new life project in Nueva Esperanza.

Murmullo Medio community leaders have worked to find new mechanisms for domestic and international accompaniment to speak out about the violence they suffered while seeking a verdict from the Colombian Government on their case. In October 2008, thanks to support from Lutheran World Relief, Justapaz and CEDECOL's Peace Commission, two community leaders met with the United States Embassy in Bogotá to discuss their community's difficult situation.

The community's concerns were also taken directly to the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. by Justapaz, the Peace Commission and other organizations. Thanks to the courage and strength of its leaders, there is a high level of interest and concern for Murmullo Medio among members of the international community.

Seed of Hope 7

Days of Prayer and Action for Peace in Colombia, 2008

Approximately 300 churches across different denominations in the United States and Canada joined together with their Colombian brothers and sisters to celebrate the annual Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia. On Sunday, April 27th 2008, churches in the North joined congregations in Colombia lifting up the peacemakers and justice-seekers of this conflict-ridden country. They prayed for peace, wisdom and guidance in seeking true peace in Colombia. On Monday, April 28th these congregations engaged in public witness for peace in Colombia.

Colombian events included an ecumenical forum on the pending US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement between the United States and Colombia, peace prayer vigils and services as well as gatherings to share personal testimonies and hold community discernment. Churches organized to hold elected officials accountable to their campaign promises and supported US policy advocacy efforts.

Colombian and US Sister churches planned weeks in advance to carry out joint services. Through the internet and by phone they joined in singing “I Ask for Peace (*Te Pido la Paz*),” shared prayers and poetry written for the occasion as well as sermons focused on God’s peace and justice. U.S. churches hosted Colombian speakers



Days of Prayer and Action participants sent approximately 13,000 postcards to send a clear message to their Members of Congress.

to hear first-hand testimony. Members signed postcards to send to their members of Congress expressing their concerns about the adverse affects of Plan Colombia and the proposed U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Colombian and Canadian sister churches extended their joint commemoration throughout lent through shared song, testimony and reflection. A Canadian sister church member who had recently visited Colombia on a Sister Church delegation shared what he learned and the images burned into his mind. They focused their service on the juxtaposition of suffering and joy in Colombia.

As part of the Days of Prayer and Action 2008 a Faith Community Letter was sent to the United States Congress. Four hundred church representatives, representing over 4.3 million Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical church members, and 20,000 congregations in the United States and Colombia from nearly twenty denominations signed a letter calling on the United States Congress to drastically reduce military aid to Colombia, to strengthen human rights protections and to vote no to the pending U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.



The Bogotá Internal Displacement Working Group, Mencildes

Chapter 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We make the following recommendations based on international human rights standards and to ensure the non-repetition of violations against Protestant and Evangelical churches; their communities and, by extension, the entire Colombian population. These recommendations will move Colombia toward a sustainable and lasting peace.

1. Cease-fire and negotiations between warring factions

Guerrillas, paramilitaries and other armed groups: Adhere to the demand of the Colombian people and implement a cease-fire and definitively end their fighting.

Colombian government and the ELN: Restart peace talks, prioritizing the needs and interests of the civilian population, as outlined by basic human rights standards. Toward this end, any such peace talks should clearly and officially welcome the participation of civil society representatives, including Protestant and Evangelical churches.

Colombian government and the FARC: Sign a humanitarian agreement.

2. Churches in peace building

Colombian government: Broaden the understanding of the right to civic participation, the right to freedom of religion and the right to worship by respecting humanitarian and pastoral church activities that include dialogue with armed groups.

The governments of the United States, European Union and Canada: Actively support peace initiatives. We are convinced that civil society efforts can significantly contribute to peace, and that diplomatic support from the United States, the European Union and Canada is crucial. Churches, as other civil society sectors, take risks to work for peace. The support and backing of the international community are key. We recommend that governments honor their vocation for reconciliation and take the risk of working to build bridges, promote dialogue through official channels or through civil society and support negotiated and nonviolent solutions to the conflict. We recommend governments review the inconsistency in providing support to military strategies while at the same time providing support for victims' recuperation programs and peace initiatives.

3. Policies for peace

Colombian government: Convene entities such as the National Peace Council and the Regional Peace Councils that were created by Colombian law to advise the Executive on issues of peace on a local, regional and national level. Take under advisement public policy recommendations formulated with an understanding of the complexities of the conflict.

4. Respect for the civilian population and churches

Colombian government and the armed groups: Definitively end the use of the civilian population in the war as a political and war-making tool. Put an end to all forced military recruitment and the use of child soldiers, both by the Colombian Armed Forces as well as the illegal armed groups.

Colombian government: Take measures to ensure the protection of the freedom of worship.

Colombian government and the armed groups: Unconditionally respect religious buildings and sites of worship.

5. Truth, justice and reparations

Colombian government: Adopt and implement a process to defend and promote the rights of victims to truth, justice and inclusive and holistic reparations as well as the right to non-repetition of violent acts. Adopt measures to ensure the safety of victims as well as their participation in public hearings incorporated in the legal proceedings against human rights violators.

6. Dismantle paramilitary groups

Colombian government: Unequivocally back investigative and legal proceedings not only against the most visible paramilitary commanders, but also their accomplices in government institutions and the Colombian Armed Forces along with those that finance them. The government must demonstrate unmistakable steps forward and successes in the fight against impunity and in dismantling the economic and political structures of the demobilized paramilitaries.

United States government: As a donor to the paramilitary demobilization process, the United States should ensure the complete and definitive dismantling of paramilitary groups and their financial and political support structures. Unconditionally support victims' efforts in seeking truth.

7. Institutional strengthening of the Colombian Government

Colombian government: Ensure the strengthening of the judicial system—especially the Supreme Court—to ensure its independence and impartiality. Also support the strengthening of the justice system in the Justice and Peace process to ensure the impartiality of legal proceedings.

United States government: Prioritize assistance directed toward democracy building and strengthening of the rule of law.

8. Justice and Peace Law

Colombian government: Review the legal procedures for demobilized paramilitaries under the Justice and Peace Law to ensure reconciliation in the process. Such procedures should include societal reintegration programs based on truth, justice and holistic reparations along with programs aimed at recovering values ravaged by the war.

9. Extradition

Colombian and United States governments: Ensure that information about military actions, as well as political and economic ties, held by demobilized and extradited paramilitary commanders is publicly confessed. These extraditions should not impede legal cases, become an obstacle to uncover the truth about crimes or hinder reparations to victims.

10. Armed Forces and Police reform

Colombian government: Refrain from issuing decrees or directives that encourage bonus payments to soldiers or government officials who provide information obtained through intelligence activities. This is ethically unprofessional, affects impartiality necessary in such work and therefore the fairness of any related court proceedings.

The Colombian Armed Forces put an end to extrajudicial executions. Prosecutorial and investigative entities should prevent, investigate, punish and publicize extrajudicial execution practices. The Attorney General's office must investigate and prosecute all reports of extrajudicial executions in a timely manner. The High Judicial Council should rule on the jurisdiction of such cases, transferring cases under the military justice system into the civilian justice system.

11. United States military aid and counter-narcotics policy

United States government: Rather than providing military aid, prioritize social aid and peace initiatives as well as assistance for strengthening democratic institutions, particularly the rule of law, promoting structures and procedures that end impunity and improve the effectiveness of the judicial branch. Adopting these recommendations—which prioritize victims, seek an approach to governing that recognizes the greatest needs and speaks to a faith in a negotiated solution to the conflict—would mean a significant change in current U.S. policy.

Adopt a new anti-narcotics policy that recognizes the negative impacts and the futility of aerial fumigation. The current policy has had the contradictory effect of making small-scale farmers more dependent on illicit crops. We emphatically request that the new policy focus specifically on drug addiction and the demand for illegal drugs in the United States.

12. Displaced persons and other vulnerable populations

Colombian government: Prioritize the needs of the victims of the armed conflict and comply with the Constitutional Court ruling on the Colombian government’s responsibilities to the displaced population.

The governments of the United States, European Union and Canada: Invest in local and community peace initiatives developed by civilians who are victims of the conflict. Take the necessary steps to ensure that all assistance makes its way to the people in need.

Canadian government: Maintain the current quota of Colombian refugees as indicated in the *Source Country Class of the Humanitarian Protection Program*. We specifically recommend that there be no change in the number of refugee applications accepted from Colombia and that this number not be reduced as refugee applications by Colombians living in other countries are admitted.

13. Human rights and peace workers

The governments of Colombia, the United States, European Union and Canada: Ensure the protection of human rights and peace workers. We value the spirit of the *European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders* and we recommend other countries adopt similar policies that prioritize protecting human rights workers.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

VIOLATION CATEGORIES AND RELATED TERMS

Attempted Homicide: An unsuccessful attempt to cause the death of a human being through a single, intentional act of violence.

Extrajudicial Execution: Homicide of a civilian by the State outside of the armed conflict.

False Positive: An extrajudicial execution reported as a death in combat. State agents often dress the civilian corpse in guerrilla camouflage and plant a weapon on their person to create the appearance of an enemy combatant.

Forced Disappearance: Consists of an armed group, usually the paramilitary or Public Security Forces, forcing a person to vanish. The victim is kidnapped, illegally detained, often tortured and nearly always killed. The corpse is disposed of so as to never be found. Fear of reprisals often keeps the family of a disappeared person from investigating the whereabouts and fate of their loved one.

Forced Displacement: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are forced to flee their homes, but unlike refugees they stay within their country's borders. This forced migration is the result of a threat against an individual or community.

Human Shield: The use of a civilian as a means of protection by one of the armed groups.

Homicide: To cause the death of a person being through a single, intentional act of violence.

Kidnapping: Taking a civilian against their will and holding them with no legal authority. An individual's freedom is deprived to force payment to finance an armed group, as a bartering chip, or to impact public opinion.

Threats: Intimidation forecasting grave harm for an individual, member of his or her family or friends, or an entire community. Threats are designed to manipulate behavior and often lead to displacement.

ARMED GROUPS

AUC: The Spanish acronym for the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*), a paramilitary umbrella group.

Paramilitaries: Illegal armed groups that have historically fought against the guerrilla and often operated in collusion with Public Security Forces. They have routinely targeted the civilian population suspected of supporting the guerrilla or withholding support from the paramilitary.

The Black Eagles (*Aguilas Negras*) and the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (*Autodefensas Gaitanistas*) are two of 53⁵¹ armed groups composed largely of formerly demobilized paramilitary who have rearmed and others who have joined their ranks. These reorganized paramilitary groupings are referred to by different names including "narco-paramilitary," "emergent groups," or "criminal groups." They carry out operations similar to paramilitary activity and are heavily involved in drug trafficking.

ELN: The Spanish acronym for the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*), Colombia's second largest guerrilla group.

FARC: The Spanish acronym for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), the oldest guerrilla group in Latin America.

51 Number of active "narco-paramilitary" groups in 2008 according to the Colombian nongovernmental organization Indepaz. Their sources: Cinep- Data Base of Human Rights and Political Violence, "Noche y Niebla," Jan-June 2008. General Secretary of the Support Mission of the Peace Process in Colombia, Organization of American States, trimester report, Jun 25 2008. National Police, Report, Nov 18 2008. Security and Democracy, report, May 2008. Human Rights Observatory of the Vice President of the Republic, Report, Jan 1 to Dec 2, 2008.

GAULA: The Spanish acronym for Unified Action Groups for Personal Freedom (*Grupos de Acción Unificada por la Libertad Personal*), Colombia's Public Security Forces specialized in fighting kidnapping, hostage taking and extortion.

Public Security Forces: Colombia's military, police and armed investigative units.

OTHER TERMS

Campesino: Subsistence farmers or small-scale agriculturalist. From "campo," Spanish for countryside or field, the term indicates an economic status and social sector.

Demobilization: Action taken by illegal armed groups to hand over their weapons, withdraw from their group and submit to the Colombian justice system. As of 2005 those voluntarily demobilizing have access to reduced penalties through the Justice and Peace Law. Demobilization can be collective or individual.

International Humanitarian Law: Often referred to as the laws of armed conflict, it defines the conduct and responsibilities of individuals engaged in warfare, both in relation to each other and civilians (or *protected persons*). Use of the term International Humanitarian Law by Justapaz and the CRVP should not be taken as tacit approval of war making, but rather as a second language to ensure effective communication of the experiences of civilians in the midst of Colombia's armed conflict.

Justice and Peace Law: The Colombian Congress passed Law 975 in 2005 based on a bill from Colombian President Uribe to provide a legal framework for the process of disarmament and demobilization of active paramilitary members. The benefits of this law are currently available for any member of an illegal armed group who voluntarily demobilizes.



Desaparecidos #6, graphite on paper by Daniel Esquivia Zapata

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