

# Colombia

Quarterly Newsletter  
Peace Brigades International Colombia

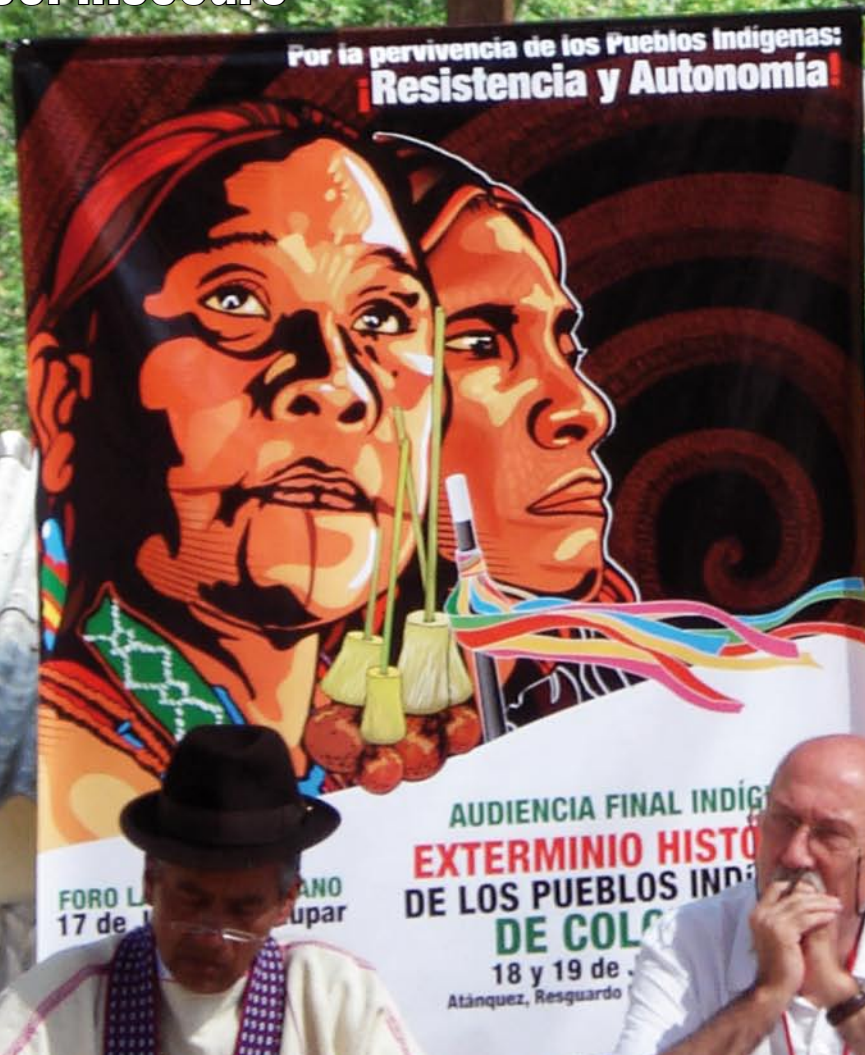
Nº 8 August 2008

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Impresión: ARFO Editores e Impresores Ltda.  
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**PBI's tenth anniversary in Uraba**

This year, the Colombia Project celebrates 10 years presence in Urabá. To mark the occasion, we held a commemorative event on July 5th, with the participation of accompanied organisations, colleagues who worked in the team in the first years and members of other organisations. On page 11 of this newsletter we highlighted the events that have marked the work of PBI in Urabá, a history of the beginning and the events and the hope experienced in these 10 years

July was a month full of important events. The liberation of the 15 FARC hostages on July 2nd, including the ex-presidential candidate, Ingrid Betancourt, has captured the world's attention. In addition to the joy at the root of the rescue, the liberation operation called "Jaque" has caused a debate about the undue use of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) emblem that is protected by International Humanitarian Law to enable the development of the protection function of this organisation.

This publication also illustrates PBI Colombia's concern about the continued accusations by Colombian authorities, including some at high level, against human rights defenders.

In the framework of human rights violations for economic interests, we offer you an interview with Marcela Ceballos, a member of MINGA accompanied by PBI, that highlights the impact of the extraction of natural resources on the security situation of communities and its leaders in the south of Putumayo. The capacity for resistance of these communities was also shown to be outstanding in the final themed hearing of the People's Permanent Tribunal – Colombia Session about "Indigenous Genocide". This session of the Tribunal was suggested as a result of the risk of extinction faced by indigenous communities in various regions, as a result of the activities of large companies, attracted by the diversity and wealth of natural resources in their territories.

With regard to the liberation of Mario Martínez of the Peasant Farmers Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC) PBI would like to insist in its recommendation to the international community that it urges the Colombian government to «provide a comprehensive reparation system, including moral reparation for those human rights defenders affected», as detailed in the sixth edition of this newsletter.

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Weltwärts

«Steadfast Protest» is fundamental for human rights defenders

## Control through torture and sexual violence

On June 26th, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Colombian Commission against Torture<sup>1</sup> published a report presenting the issue of torture in Colombia.<sup>2</sup> The report emphasises the 26 cases which describe the situation in the Catatumbo region where «there are repeated complaints from the community about the systematic human rights violations inflicted on inhabitants there by members of the Mobile Brigade and the 30th Brigade. This situation may be interpreted as persecution of the small farmer communities and their organisational processes by means of threats, accusations, extrajudicial executions, persecution, torture and inhuman, degrading and cruel treatment against this population».

Some of the conclusions of the report indicate that «the ‘Democratic Security policy’ has caused the increase in human rights violations committed by state actors» and that «sexual violence against women and girls continues to be a control mechanism used against the civilian population and a weapon of war». The document also draws attention to the fact that «the internal armed conflict and the political violence in Colombia provide a favourable context for the implementation of new strategies of psychological torture that leave no evidence and that continue to produce devastating effects on victims».

### ‘Steadfast in Protest’

On June 19th, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT), programme that accompanies, monitors and protects defenders all year round, published its 2007 annual report *Steadfast in Protest*. The report includes contributions from Hina Jilani, Desmond Tutu, Barbara Hendricks, José Ramos Horta, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Wei Jingsheng. It celebrates the steadfast protest of all human rights defenders.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Observatory, «Colombia is also one of the countries where the greatest number of human rights defenders is murdered. According to the Colombian Commission of Jurists (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas - CCJ),



Jorge Mata / SURIMAGES - IPA

«Sexual violence against women and girls continues to be a control mechanism used against the civilian population and a weapon of war», concludes the Colombian Coalition Against Torture.

44 defenders were killed in 2007». The report emphasises the persistent stigmatisation of activities carried out in the defence of human rights and insists that «Whilst the great majority of the acts of violence committed against defenders (threats, attacks, harassment, even killings or enforced disappearances) remain unpunished, in 2007 the authorities continued to speak of defenders often in aggressive terms – especially of those who condemn the violence committed by armed protagonists – and to discredit their activities, accusing them of having links with the guerrillas».

Two examples used in the report are statements by President Uribe, one of them in Tierralta (Córdoba) on February 3rd, 2007, comparing human rights defenders to «terrorists dressed in civilian clothes». (for more information, see page 5) and another in October of the same year before the judges of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights stating that «every time members of the guerrilla and their followers feel that they can be defeated, they resort to appeals against human rights violations».

One sector that is particularly

vulnerable to attacks from the government is that of defenders fighting against impunity. As stated in the report, «Many NGOs received threats from ‘new’ paramilitary groups» such as in the department of Nariño, where, in March and June 2007, they received e-mail threats from the paramilitary group ‘New Generation of Black Eagles’ «accusing them of being ‘terrorists hiding behind human rights’». The threats have additional effects as: «It is also extremely frequent for organisations and defenders who file complaints against the violence committed by the military to be victims of reprisals».

Clearly they are not alone. As the report reminds us, «acts of violence also target defenders of union rights, women, the poor, persons displaced by the armed conflict and ethnic minorities».

<sup>1</sup> Association of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared (ASFADDES), Association for Alternative Social Promotion (MINGA), The José Alvear Restrepo Lawyer’s Collective (CCAJAR), Colombian Commission of Jurists (CCJ), AVRE Corporation, Reiniciar Corporation, Committee for Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP), World Organisation against Torture (OMCT), Terre des Homme Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Report on Torture, Cruel, Inhuman and other degrading treatment in Colombia, January – December 2007, Colombian Commission against Torture. July 15th, 2008. [2007/splitted/report2007obs\\_eng\\_americas.pdf](http://www.omct.org/pdf/observatory/2008/annual_report_)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.omct.org/pdf/observatory/2008/annual\\_report\\_](http://www.omct.org/pdf/observatory/2008/annual_report_)



Threats against victims of unfounded criminal investigations

## Constant intimidation by the 'Black Eagles'

The recent security incidents against human rights NGOs follow the same patterns previously pointed out by PBI, such as the risks of unfounded criminal investigations and constant intimidation through e-mails sent by the self-named 'Black Eagles'.

Members of the Committee for Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP) received death threats from the 'Black Eagles' in April of this year. The CSPP was alarmed by the fact that, for the first time, these threats were aimed at Maria Señedo and Nicolas Castro, two members of the organisation's office in the Atlantic region. The mention of the names of Jose Humberto Torres and Gabriel Principe

### 'Black Eagles' send letters with an 'anti-subversive' message

Gonzalez Arango also gave cause for concern, given that both of them had previously been victims of unfounded criminal investigations. Gonzalez was in prison for 16 months and Torres had to go into exile. When the investigations against each of them were closed without charges being brought against them, neither of them was able to publicly clear their good name. Recently, PBI expressed its

concern about a similar case, related to the security of the members of the Board of the Peasant Farmers Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC), victims of unfounded criminal investigations, four of whom were set free, but without their name being cleared (for more information, see page 11).

In Barrancabermeja, the climate of unease and anxiety as a result of the threats by illegal groups continues to reign. In the month of June, threats appeared signed, for the first time, by the 'United Black Eagles of Colombia', apparently with the aim of creating associations in people's minds with the demobilised paramilitary group, the *United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia* (AUC). These death threats were sent by mail to head offices of organisations in Barrancabermeja, including some of those accompanied by PBI. Those same NGOs have been previously reporting incidents of 'social cleansing' and the circulation of 'black lists'.

In Curbaradó (Chocó), PBI was presented when the attacks took place against accompanied organisations and small farmers in the region, who are involved in the process of land demarcation and its return to displaced population. These attacks coincide with strong public statements against the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP), PBI and other

organisations, in which they are accused of collaborating with the guerrilla, which, in this region, could put these people's lives in danger.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of its work, PBI has noted that authors of these threats, the self-named 'Black Eagles', send letters with an 'antisubversive' message, very similar to the AUC's paramilitaries intimidation prior to demobilisation. Above all, the political intention to silence those critics who are working to achieve the respect of fundamental rights is clear. The phenomenon of the 'Black Eagles', normally considered by the Colombian state to be related to petty crime, seems to be more structured as time goes on and poses real risks for defenders.<sup>2</sup>

PBI has been able to observe that the security of defenders is at risk for several reasons, including for those who speak out for the defence of human rights, and are subsequently stigmatised in public statements made by high ranking government officials. Other problems include physical aggression in rural areas and death threats that generate fear and displacement. ●

<sup>1</sup> "Amenazas y estigmatizaciones contra organismos de derechos humanos", Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, June 26th, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> "Águilas Negras amenazan a dirigentes sociales en Barrancabermeja", Semana, June 23rd, 2008.

## «Don't justify it, do it right»

«Don't justify it, do it right» Various Colombian organisations launched the 'Victims and Rights' campaign with this slogan on May 9th, with the aim of reminding Colombian society and raising public awareness of the forgotten stories and the impact of crimes that have taken place during more than 60 years of armed conflict. The campaign aims to show victims that they are not alone and that society supports them in the process of rebuilding their lives.

The organisations chose Bolivar Square in Bogota, a central location for Colombian politics, to launch the cam-

paign. In front of the Law Courts, the Mayor's Office and National Congress, the organisations set up a 'memory tunnel' with photos and reminders of the atrocities committed throughout the country.

The *Contravia* television programme, presented by Hollman Morris, who also participates in the campaign, has produced a television series about victims' rights. In order to see the programmes, visit the website [www.contravia.tv](http://www.contravia.tv).

The campaign is being run by Intermón-Oxfam and PBI is participating as an international observer. Other activities will be developed in the framework



of this campaign to raise awareness of the strength and the means of resistance used by those who have been most affected by the armed conflict in Colombia and to show the legitimacy of the defence of human rights. For more information about the programme, visit the website: [www.hazlojusto.org](http://www.hazlojusto.org) ●

<sup>1</sup> *Contravia* is a television programme that focuses on presenting the human rights situation in Colombia.

# The stigmatisations persist

In Colombia, the noun accusation and the verb to accuse are automatically associated with the act of discrediting someone and delegitimising their work. In a context of conflict, making unfounded accusations about a human rights defender or associating them with illegal activities creates a widespread atmosphere of suspicion and puts their reputation, their work and even their life at risk.

For this reason, the Presidential Guideline 07 was established in 1999, ratified by the current government that orders all public servants «to abstain from questioning the legitimacy of human rights organisations and their members, who act in accordance with the constitution and the law; to abstain from making statements that discredit, harass or encourage harassment of these organisations, and from releasing public or private statements that stigmatise the specific work of these organisations. All public servants must abstain from making false allegations or accusations that compromise the security, as well as the honour and the good name of human rights organisations and their members».<sup>1</sup>

## The behaviour dictated by Presidential Guideline 07 is not always respected

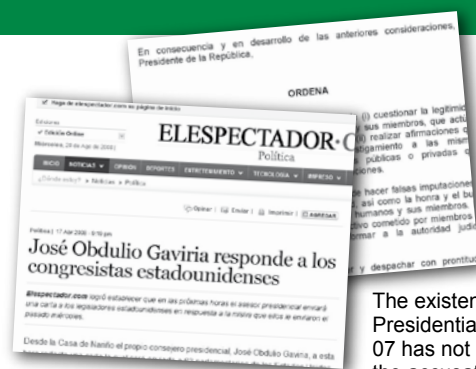
However, the behaviour dictated by the above-mentioned guideline is not always respected. On various occasions, Colombian authorities such as members of the military, Government officials and the President of the Republic have made public statements that violate this standard.

The statement made by presidential advisor, José Obdulio Gaviria, in March serves as an example of the dangers implicit in such accusations. In an interview with the El Espectador newspaper, the advisor stated that the protest march organised by the victims of paramilitary violence on March 6th had been planned by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Following the demonstration, various social organisations and NGOs received death threats via e-mail. In one week, four trade union leaders were assassinated.<sup>2</sup> On March 13th, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia reported their concern for various recent murders, within the context of the March protest.<sup>3</sup>

This year, various public servants, including the Colombian president, have, at different times, uttered serious accusations against the work and reputation of Iván Cepeda. The well-known human rights defender is also a columnist for the El Espectador newspaper, spokesperson for the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) and director of the 'Manuel Cepeda Vargas' Foundation, that was created in memory of his father, a senator of the republic, who like approximately 3,000 other members of the Unión Patriótica political party was assassinated during the 1990's. The Colombian state has accepted the responsibility of its agents for this crime before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights.<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore strange that, in May, the government press secretary, César Mauricio Velásquez and the Colombian president himself questioned the legitimacy of Cepeda's activities. Velásquez



The existence of the Presidential Guideline 07 has not stopped the accusations.

accused Cepeda of «posing as a victim of human rights violations» when, «in reality, he incites others to commit human rights violations».<sup>5</sup> Uribe Vélez stated that «there are people in Colombia, like Iván Cepeda that disguise themselves as protectors of victims. And the protection of victims allows them to have NGOs that request funding from the international community [...] it allows them to instigate human rights violations against those who do not share their ideas».<sup>6</sup>

Such declarations have caused a stir amongst the national and international community. 69 Colombian organisations signed a letter to the President asking for a public retraction and insisting on the fact that public servants should refrain from making such statements against the victims of state crimes and their organisations.<sup>7</sup> Previously, 63 members of US congress, in a letter to the President considered Gaviria's statements to be «not only inexact, but dangerous». The politicians requested that the Colombian government «take a firm public stand to support those who promote and protect human rights».<sup>8</sup> Gaviria replied in an open letter, saying that «I did not suggest then, nor do I now, that Iván Cepeda is a member of the FARC».<sup>9</sup> ●

1 Presidential Guideline July 1999

2 "La destitución de José Obdulio Gaviria", El Espectador newspaper, March 14th, 2008.

3 "Preocupación por amenazas y asesinatos de defensores de derechos humanos" UNHCHR, March 13th, 2008.

4 "State accepts responsibility in the assassination of ex-congressman", El País, March 6th, 2007.

5 Letter to El Espectador newspaper, Presidential Press Secretary, Communications department, César Mauricio Velásquez O., news , May 3rd, 2008

6 Words of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez at the opening of the Montería Bus Terminal, May 6th, 2008

7 "Open letter to Uribe for accusations against Iván Cepeda", May 7th, 2008.

8 "In the US, 63 members of congress request that José O. Gaviria moderate his language", El Espectador newspaper, April 15th, 2008.

9 Text of the letter of José Obdulio Gaviria to US members of Congress, El Espectador newspaper, April 15th, 2008.

10 The Situation of Human Rights Defenders, International Human Rights Federation, March 30th, 2005.

## PBI also questioned

The legitimacy of PBI's work has also been questioned previously by president Alvaro Uribe and other public servants, compromising the protection work that the organisation carries out in Colombia.

During a speech made in the Apartado Security Council in 2004, the President accused the San Jose de Apartado Peace Community and its international companions, the most well known being

Fellowship for Reconciliation (FOR) and PBI, of obstructing Colombian justice, adding that these organisations should be imprisoned or deported if they were to interfere again in the work of the legal authorities.<sup>10</sup>



The hearing was organised by the National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (ONIC).

The TPP is based on international human rights conventions, and is composed of well-known judges from different countries. Their verdict does not have legal implications; it is rather a moral judgement. In the indigenous TPP, aside from the international judges, there were several indigenous judges from communities in Colombia. The indigenous TPP was the final hearing of the Colombian Chapter of the TPP (see article on page 7), which ended with a final session in Bogotá from 21st to 23rd July. Previously, the TPP in Colombia held hearings on the food industry, mining, biodiversity, oil and public services. Read the verdict of the TPP and the international agreements mentioned above, at [www.pbi-colombia.org](http://www.pbi-colombia.org)

Their natural resources are too valuable

## Indigenous peoples, at risk of extinction

At the foot of the magnificent Sierra Nevada mountain range, in the indigenous Kankuamo people's lands, between 18 and 19 July 2008, the indigenous peoples of Colombia held the last thematic hearing of the Colombian Session of the People's Permanent Tribunal (TPP).

The invitation to the event highlighted the fact that 18 indigenous peoples in Colombia are at risk of extinction, yet the absence of the national media showed the lack of general interest at this tragic fact. Meanwhile, indigenous people were asking themselves «Why are they killing us?»

This extermination is linked to the natural resources found in indigenous lands, according to the verdict of the hearing, which accuses a multitude of large companies of uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, the contamination of water and lands, and the destruction of flora and fauna. The hearing also reported on links between these companies and armed groups. The judges asked for an end to «strategies used to remove the indigenous population through threats from armed groups, violations and militarisation of indigenous lands» and

they requested that an end be brought to the unfounded criminal investigations against indigenous leaders. «The mere defence of one's rights is enough to turn one into a victim of the armed wing of the law», concluded the TPP judges.

The hearing was organised by the National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (ONIC), which together with the community of Atánquez in the Cesar region, transported, housed and fed more than a thousand participants from Colombia and throughout the world. Among those taking part were wide sectors of Colombian

civil society, the United Nations, and other representatives of the international community, including indigenous peoples from Latin America, Canada and Sweden.

Iván Cepeda, spokesperson for the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE), called for an alliance between indigenous peoples and the social movement.

«Let's act together, no more fragmented struggles. The demonstration on 6 March [against paramilitarism and State crimes] was a marvellous collective example, and we should repeat it». ●

### Two of the accompanied of PBI at the TPP

Several organisations accompanied by PBI attended this hearing of the TPP. Two of these organisations told PBI why they took part in the Indigenous TPP, and how the hearing is linked to their work with indigenous peoples' struggles.



**Amaury Padilla – Association for Alternative Social Promotion MINGA**

«We believe in these kinds of events. Although they do not carry legal weight, they do carry ethical and moral weight. This process gives a

voice to indigenous people. It is an event rich in diversity, but also painful because of the denouncements being made. MINGA accompanies the processes of several communities, offering legal support and organisational strengthening.



**Judith Maldonado – 'Luis Carlos Pérez' Lawyers' Collective (CALCP)**

«The aim of the TPP is to raise awareness of violations of the rights of indigenous peoples, related to the exploitation of natural resources in their lands. We work with and

accompany the indigenous Bari people in the North of Santander, who suffer aggression caused by the exploitation of oil and coal; we support their process of defence and resistance, offering legal, educational, and political advocacy support».



## After three years, the TPP has come to a conclusion

Before a sea of people, who filled the León de Greiff Auditorium in the National University in Bogotá on July 23rd, ten international judges read the final verdict of the Peoples' Permanent Tribunal (TPP). This verdict represents the end of a three-year process of grassroots trials.

Throughout the hearings, the judges heard numerous witness statements made by victims of the activities of transnational companies, who have profited from crimes against humanity.

According to the Tribunal, there is a connection between foreign investment and human rights violations such as mass displacements, the murder of trade union leaders, and massacres carried out against the population. The exploitation of natural resources and the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects have also left their mark in the form of exploitation of natural resources, placing the population at risk and destroying the environment and biodiversity.

The final verdict not only condemned transnational companies «for serious, clear and persistent violations of general principles and standards, and of international conventions», but also the Colombian State for permitting and implementing the conduct and practices of these companies. The judges recommended that the international community name a special rapporteur dedicated to the subject of transnational companies and human rights violations.

The verdict in itself has no legal implications. Nevertheless, the judges recommended that the Attorney from the International Criminal Court open an investigation into the Colombian case, where they consider that the TPP has proven «the existence of numerous crimes which fall within the Court's jurisdiction».

## INTERVIEW with Marcela Ceballos, MINGA Association

# Small farmer protests put pressure on the oil companies

The situation in the south of Colombia is characterised by a lack of security, precarious living conditions, and high risks for community leaders. This was the conclusion of an observation mission in the lower Putumayo region, which took place in April 2008. Among the participants in the mission was the Association for Alternative Social Promotion MINGA, who are accompanied by PBI. In an interview with PBI, Marcela Ceballos of MINGA shared her experiences gained on the mission.

**PBI: What is MINGA's interest in the Putumayo department?**

**Marcela Ceballos:** MINGA has begun a process to monitor the effects of Plan Colombia (the US military and social funding plan in Colombia) on the human rights situation in this region where there are no human rights organisations, and where the communities live in isolation.

**What is the impact of the extraction of natural resources on the lives of the local population?**

There is no real study which documents these effects. The oil companies have carried out studies into environmental impacts, but they are highly unrealistic. We have found that these studies are lacking in many aspects, including in terms of cultural impact. The oil companies have not improved material living conditions at all, because, for example, in border areas such as Puerto Vega - Teteyé, where they are already exploring large wells, the roads continue to be unpaved, there is no electricity, there are no health centres, and no schools.

**Putumayo is known for the variety of indigenous peoples living in the region. What did the mission observe in terms of the extraction of natural resources in indigenous lands?**

In indigenous lands in Buenavista, in the rural area around Puerto Asís, there are already two oil wells, and indigenous lands have become militarised, a phenomenon which always goes hand in hand with the exploitation of resources. On the day that the report was presented,



PBI accompanied MINGA on the observation mission.

## Putumayo: energy reserve

The Putumayo region is situated on the border with Ecuador. Its lands are inhabited by 13 indigenous peoples, with six living in the lower Putumayo region (Cofanes, Kitchuas, Emberas, Awa, Nasa, and Sionas). Despite the fact that the Putumayo region holds vast oil reserves, which are being exploited and possesses great natural and ecological diversity, the people in the region live in extreme poverty in precarious living conditions.

indigenous people denounced the arrival of the army and the police in their lands in Santo Anselmo, and this arrival has already had an impact on the number of threats towards leaders by illegal armed groups, such as the guerrilla.

**Are there reports naming transnational oil companies?**

Not directly. In 2006, indigenous farmers who live in the Puerto Vega-Teteyé region carried out a demonstration to put pressure on the authorities, to begin a dialogue with an oil company which is part of the Colombian Consortium operating in the region. This dialogue was to be based on the indigenous people's needs for social investment. Their peaceful demonstration was repressed by the anti-disturbance squad (ESMAD), and the final result was that the company agreed to invest a mere 15,000 dollars in the development of the region. However, the leader who was negotiating this plan was subsequently murdered. ●

Criticised by the Colombian Commission of Jurists (CCJ)

# CCJ: The extradition represents a serious precedent

Since May 13th, US jails have 14 new Colombian prisoners who will be tried for drug trafficking. They are the group of 14 extradited prisoners; paramilitary leaders who demobilised under the 975 Law. President Uribe decided to extradite them allegedly because they were continuing to commit crimes from prison, they had not complied with the reparation of their victims and that they were not collaborating with the justice system.<sup>1</sup> The decision of the government to carry out the extradition, authorised by the Supreme Court, left both victims and international organisations incredulous. They are asking themselves what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure access to truth, justice and reparation and how will the perpetrators of atrocious crimes, such as massacres, forced disappearances and systematic assassinations pay for their crimes that took place on Colombian soil.<sup>2</sup>

«The legitimate interest in pursuing abroad drug trafficking crimes committed by demobilised ex-paramilitaries should be complemented with specific cooperation and facilitation measures to ensure that the processes against them in Colombia do not fall by the wayside. If this does not happen, the validity of extradition as an instrument in the fight against impunity would be seriously questioned», suggested the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time as the news about the extradition, the government announced a series of agreements with the US authorities that, in the interests of the search for truth, would provide for the possibility that the extradited paramilitaries would

## The government announced a series of agreements with the US

also be tried for crimes against humanity and not only for drug trafficking. However, to date, the content and reach of the said agreements has not been published, as Gustavo Gallón, director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists (CCJ)

explains. «The most likely explanation is that agreements and conversations have taken place that have not been formalised in writing», he adds.

The fact that the United States is currently under no legal obligation to ensure that the paramilitaries are tried for crimes against humanity in Colombia and that therefore, the collaboration of the US in their being tried for such crimes would be entirely voluntary, adds to the systematic lack of respect for victims' rights in Colombia. Not only the restrictions of the 975 Law, but also the possibility of attending the trials, have been determining factors in this lack of recognition. Now that the trials will take place in the United States, the right of victims to participate in the trials will be almost impossible.

«Once the perpetrators leave, there is a risk that many experiences will remain interiorized within the victims, without the possibility of being shared, given that the interlocutor has left. Without an opponent, with whom to construct their stories, it is difficult to tell the story; it is not possible to relate what has happened and a part of it will remain hidden or silenced», says the AVRE Corporation, an organisation that provides support to victims of socio-political violence.

Statements by the government and some members of the media may make one think that there was no other option, that carrying out the threat of extradition was the only alternative given the behaviour of the ex-paramilitary leaders, who with their cell phones, Internet and corrupt ways, continued to commit crimes from national prisons. Furthermore, the government stated that those extradited would spend 15 years in jail, double the prison term they would have received in Colombia<sup>4</sup>; given the terms of the 975 or Justice and Peace Law that reduced the prison term to eight years in exchange for telling the truth and providing reparation for their victims. However, others suggest that there was another, logical and possible, road to justice – ordinary justice – as

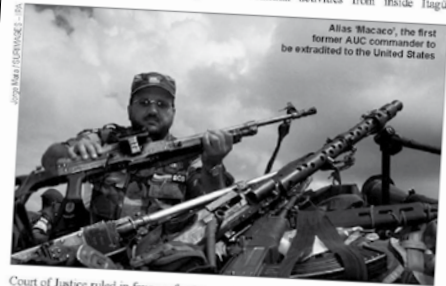
Former paramilitary leaders on their way to the United States

## Extraditions make the search for truth more difficult

The sensitive subject of the extradition of demobilised paramilitary commanders dominated the Colombian press throughout the months of April and May this year, once more highlighting discrepancies between the Government's official line on the paramilitary demobilisation process, and the opinion of victims' organisations. The Supreme

of murders and other crimes 'Macaco' must answer for, he is also considered to be one of the most powerful drug traffickers in Colombia.

The Government of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez supported the decision to extradite 'Macaco' on the basis that the former paramilitary had continued his criminal activities from inside Juguit



Alas 'Macaco', the first former AUC commander to be extradited to the United States

Arguing that extradition is a necessary mechanism in the fight against terrorism, the Colombian President assured the country that «to not extradite him would be to weaken Democratic Security and increase the risk for victims and for all those citizens who could be potential victims». As stipulated in Chapter II of Law 975, 'Macaco' did not cease his illicit activities and should therefore lose all the benefits of this Law

In issue no. 7 of *ColomPBla*, PBI highlighted criticism of the extraditions. The subject continues to generate considerable interest in the Colombian press.

suggested by members of the government several times last year. Under the ordinary justice system, the paramilitary leaders could face sentences of up to 60 years and the only means of reducing such sentences would be effective collaboration with the justice system.

Rafael Pardo, ex Minister of Defence in Colombia, told the BBC that the government preferred to «exchange the truth

## In the ordinary justice system they could face sentences of up to 60 years

about the humanitarian tragedy that the country has suffered for information about cocaine trafficking».<sup>5</sup>

According to Gallón, the extradition of the paramilitary leaders represents a very serious precedent regarding guarantees of non-repetition. «The message that society receives from the State is that the crimes committed against Colombian society by these people and the groups they led were not serious». ●

1 "Polémica y dudas", BBC, May 14th, 2008.

2 "IACHR expresses concern about the extradition of Colombian paramilitaries, Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, May 14th, 2008

3 "Statement about the extradition of 12 ex paramilitary leaders and its impact on the fight against impunity" UNHCHR, May 13th, 2008

4 "Golpe histórico", Semana May 17th, 2008.

5 "Polémica y dudas", BBC, May 14th, 2008.



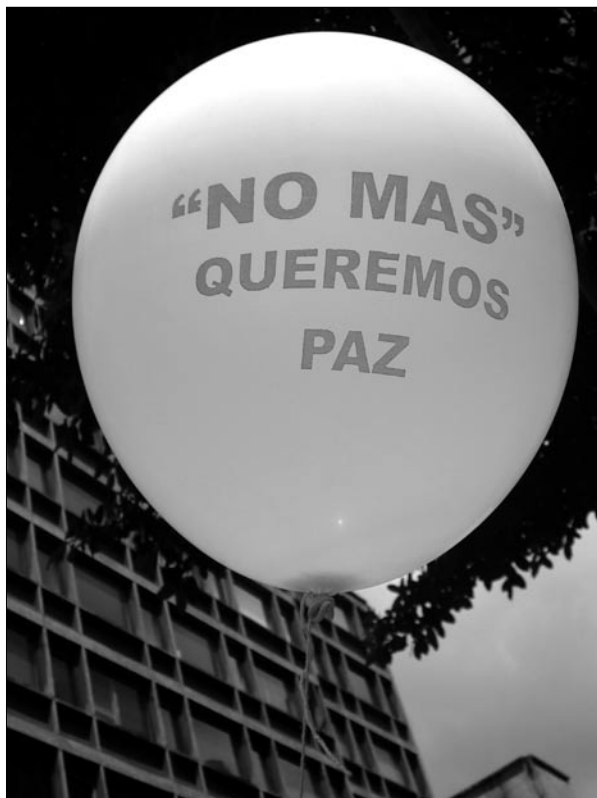
Protest march against kidnapping and the FARC

## The Colombians continue to reject violence

The Colombian Army carried out Operation Jaque on July 2nd, with the aim of rescuing a group of FARC hostages from the Colombian jungle. The operation was a success and 15 hostages were freed: members of the civilian population including Ingrid Betancourt, as well as members of the Colombian army and police force. The rescue caused a wave of national and international reactions, as mentioned in the *Semana* magazine headline *The world was overwhelmed*.<sup>1</sup> The joy at this news dominated the headlines for several days and culminated in a massive turnout for the protest march against kidnapping and the FARC on July 20th – National Independence Day.

Away from the jubilant rejoicing, a debate was taking place about the use of the International Committee of the Red Cross symbol during this operation. The Colombian government, after spending several days denying it, admitted that, «out of nervousness», an official was wearing an ICRC waistcoat at the time of the operation.<sup>2</sup> This emblem is protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and as such must be respected in all circumstances and may not be abused; to represent a war crime,<sup>3</sup> a violation of IHL or in atypical behaviour.<sup>4</sup> «I assume the responsibility and we regret that this has happened», stated president Alvaro Uribe.<sup>5</sup> The ICRC took note of the statement and issued a press release as a reminder of the fact that the symbol of the organisation aims to protect and enables «its representatives to enter conflict zones and generate trust between different parties».<sup>6</sup>

There was not just one march, but several, both in Colombia and in various capital cities around the world. Rejection of kidnapping by the Colombian people was clear given the number of people that participated in the march. A few lone spokespeople found the media space to underline the fact that, amidst this joy and simultaneous rejection of the FARC violence, other violence should not be forgotten. Rodrigo Uprimny, director of *Dejusticia* and lecturer at the National University, in his column in the *El Espectador* newspaper,<sup>7</sup> commented that



During 2008 Colombians have marched in protest against violence on three occasions, February 4th, March 6th and July 20th.

«these protests are extremely important and generate optimism (...). Kidnapping is an atrocious crime that should be condemned and that must be eradicated from Colombia (...). However, in Colombia, there are other victims of other actors, the FARC, who have earned our rejection, do not hold the monopoly on cruelty. In the last two decades (...) thousands of Colombians have been massacred and disappeared and millions have been displaced from their land by paramilitary groups, who counted on the complicity of high ranking officers of the army and the police, as well as representatives of the political and economic elite. However, there was no mention of these victims on the July 20th march, nor were there any solidarity gestures made towards them. There were very few shouting in favour of returning land to the displaced population or that the fate of the disappeared be clarified.»

In the past few months, other topical themes have been covered by the media. The debate about the extradition of the

ex-paramilitary leaders continues, to the point that the judge, Baltasar Garzón, suggested «that it would be ‘absolutely necessary’ that the trial of the extradited paramilitary leaders should take place in Colombia and whilst they are in prison».<sup>8</sup> Another piece of news was the confrontation between the Supreme Court and President Uribe after the statement of Yidis Medina, in which she admits: «that high ranking members of the first administration of Alvaro Uribe made her promises which they did not keep, in exchange for her vote in favour of re-election».<sup>9</sup>

The Supreme Court «questioned long and hard the approval of the provisional legislative bill that revived the presidential re-election in Colombia»<sup>10</sup>

speaking of a «clear deviation of power», to which Uribe «responded saying that some judges were being nostalgic about the agonising terrorism».<sup>11</sup> And for the first time, a law that aims to provide guarantees for victims of the violence was approved in the Senate.<sup>12</sup> This is the first step in the long road ahead to legislation. ●

1 “El mundo se emocionó”, *Semana*, June 28th, 2008.

2 “Emblema de la Cruz Roja sí fue usado por oficial que participó en rescate de secuestrados: Uribe”, *El Tiempo* newspaper, July 16th, 2008

3 “Colombia: el CICR reitera la importancia del respeto del emblema de la Cruz Roja”, International Committee of the Red Cross, July 16th, 2008.

4 “Emblema polémico”, *Semana*, July 19th, 2008.

5 “Gobierno reconoce que utilizó emblema de la Cruz Roja en Operación Jaque”, *El Espectador* newspaper, July 16th, 2008.

6 “Cruz Roja no iniciará acciones contra Colombia por uso indebido de emblema en operación de rescate”, *El Tiempo* newspaper, July 17th, 2008.

7 “La marcha y nuestra asimetría moral”, *El Espectador* newspaper, July 22nd, 2008.

8 “Sería Necesario Que Juicio A Jefes ‘Paras’ Se Celebrara Aquí”, Juez Garzón” *El Tiempo* newspaper, June 26th, 2008.

9 “¿Yidis tras las rejas?”, *Semana*, April 26th, 2008

10 “Condena A Yidis: Corte Suprema Cuestiona Aprobación De Reelección”, *El Tiempo* newspaper, June 27th, 2008.

11 “La otra guerra”, *Semana*, July 5th, 2008.

12 “Victimas a la carga”, *Semana*, July 21st, 2008.

■ Medellín

# Fear returns to Medellín

In December 2007, at the end of his term as mayor of Medellín, Sergio Fajardo declared that after the demobilisation of the paramilitary groups the city had turned «fear into hope». With relatively low rates of violence, the capital of Antioquia had become an important destination for both tourists and investors.

However, a recent increase in murders reminds us that fear still exists in the city. Figures from the Medellín police show 261 murders in the first five months of the year, a rise of around 10% when compared with figures from last year.<sup>1</sup>

The reasons behind this increase in violence are the cause of current debate. The local government attributes the violence to turf wars among drug-traffickers, and insists that paramilitaries are not the cause.<sup>2</sup>

This viewpoint is supported by official figures which show that 90% of demobilised paramilitaries in Medellín are still following their reinsertion programmes. The local government maintains that the few who continue to commit crimes are no longer members of armed structures, and argues that the inhabitants of marginalised neighbourhoods who continue to call them ‘paras’ are thinking according to old structures, and that they are therefore mistaken.<sup>3</sup>

The director of the National Police, Oscar Naranjo, insists that these gangs are not part of a counter-insurgency war, and as such cannot be called paramilitaries. «There is also an additional element; these criminal gangs are involved in confrontations with the army and the police».<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, young people from marginalised neighbourhoods in the city have reported the existence of groups of demobilised paramilitaries who prevent candidates applying to Neighbourhood Committees, and that some members of the police allow these groups to operate.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, ‘black lists’ are being circulated throughout the city, naming supposedly drug-dependent young people, signed by the ‘Black Eagles’.

According to the local government human rights office in Medellín, two out of every three victims of forced displacement within the city of Medellín in 2007,

accused the paramilitaries of being responsible. 11% named the guerrilla as responsible, thereby showing that the armed conflict in marginalised neighbourhoods of Medellín continues. Furthermore, in 2007 more than 1,000 people were displaced within Medellín, while the figure for 2005 stood at 415. «The paramilitary phenomenon has not disappeared from the city», according to the local government human rights office.<sup>6</sup>

Political magazine *Semana* has revealed that in Medellín more and more offers are being made to ex-paramilitary combatants, inviting them to earn between 800,000 and one million pesos (440 – 550 USD) per month by joining the ranks of new illegal groups.<sup>7</sup>

The Grassroots Training Institute (IPC), an organisation accompanied by PBI, carries out research and training in marginalised neighbourhoods of Medellín, known as ‘Comunas’. Through its press agency, the IPC has become the main source of public information on the violent reality in the city.

Nelly Osorno, member of the IPC working in the 4th and 13th Comunas, says that the atmosphere in the city has once more become very difficult. While the IPC has not recently suffered many problems in carrying out their work, they do notice resistance to their presence on the part of some demobilised paramilitaries, who see the IPC as an obstacle because of their work as observers to the demobilisation process. They question the independence of the IPC, and call them «guerrillas».

For Nelly Osorno, the question of whether these groups fit into the definition of paramilitarism or not, is irrelevant. «The important thing to consider is that they continue carrying out the same practices and methods in marginalised neighbourhoods of the city», she states.

Since the demobilisation, there has been a strong presence of demobilised paramilitaries within local projects for community participation, as they attempt to gain control over the funds granted to run



Nelly Osorno, member of the IPC that works in the 4th and 13th comunas, comments that the atmosphere in the city has once more become very difficult.

these projects. According to Osorno, they could hold influence over some 80% of Neighbourhood Committees in the city. While for some inhabitants of marginalised neighbourhoods this participation is perfectly legitimate, others report that in some cases the methods used by demobilised are no different to the way they operated when they were still armed. «Many people have stopped participating in these projects out of fear», states Osorno.

She believes that the whole process is a time bomb, and that adequate controls and mechanisms to monitor the process must be established. On the contrary, the situation could become worse than it was before the demobilisation began. There is also a fear among ex-paramilitaries that there will soon be no more funds for their rehabilitation programmes and many say that when the money is finished, they will take up arms again. ●

Consult the sources of this article and additional information on paramilitarism in Medellín at [www.pbi-colombia.org](http://www.pbi-colombia.org)

1 “¿Vuelve la noche horrible?”, *Semana*, June 14th 2008.

2 “Medellín enfrenta su realidad criminal”, *El Mundo*, March 2nd 2008.

3 *Ibid.*

4 “Oficina” de Envigado busca “patrón” para sobrevivir: general Naranjo, IPC, February 14th 2008.

5 “Intimidación y control social: cotidianidad de los barrios”, IPC, June 20th 2008.

6 Annual report of the local government human rights office in Medellín, 2007.

7 “Se crece el enano”, *Semana*, May 31st 2008.

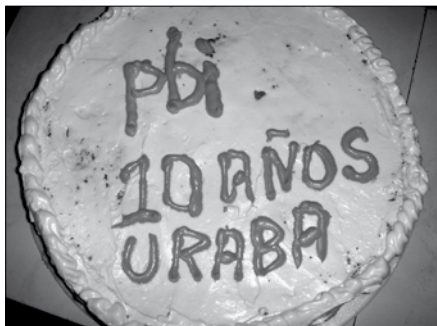
## ■ Uraba

# PBI celebrated with the communities

On July 5th this year, in the town of Turbo, Antioquia, PBI commemorated and remembered a decade of accompaniment in the Urabá region. It all began in 1997, an extremely cruel year in Urabá. Several military operations in the region were the cause of huge displacements, threats and murders. In response to these displacements, the small farmers and Afro-Colombians organised and formed the San Francisco de Asis Peace Community, the San Jose de Apartado Peace Community and shortly afterwards the Community for Self-determination, Life and Dignity in Cacarica (CAVIDA).

These examples of resistance were accompanied by organisations like the Centre for Investigation and Grassroots Education (CINEP) and the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP), who in turn requested the international presence of PBI because of the difficult situation, the lack of security for the communities, and the constant threats against them.

In 1998, three members of PBI arrived



in the region to evaluate the requests from these organisations, and in December of that year they carried out their first accompaniment on the Atrato River. The following year, a team was established in the town of Turbo.

From this moment on, these communities suffered terrible losses, such as various murders of local leaders, and in addition, cases of displacement, economic blockade, and other violations of their rights.

There have also been moments of hope, such as the first returns of displaced communities, international events, com-

memorations, demonstrations of national and international solidarity, proposals such as the Universidad Campesina (Small Farmers' University), legal recognition, peace prizes, the founding of new humanitarian and biodiversity zones, partnerships, and the Peoples' Permanent Tribunal on Biodiversity, which was held in the Nueva Esperanza Humanitarian Zone, in the Cacarica river basin.

During the PBI celebration in Turbo, PBI listened to the memories and stories of some members of accompanied communities. Members of the community brought the following poem from Cacarica:

*«... y una cosa le queríamos solicitar  
al subequipo de Urabá,  
que en los próximos años,  
no nos dejen de acompañar»*

*«... And one thing we would like to hear  
From the team in Urabá  
Is that for the next ten years  
You won't stop being  
our accompaniers» ●*

## ■ Bogota

# Enthusiasm about the alternative land registry in Sucre

In its search for a solution to the problem of lands stolen from small farmers, the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) has been working on an «alternative land registry» strategy since October 2007, supported with funds from the Canadian Embassy. Based on the experiences of a number of NGOs, studies were carried out to show the true dimension of stolen lands, which could be used to form the basis for legal actions demanding the return of lands, and to open up a debate on agrarian reform. On June 27th, Professor Jaime Bonilla from the National University in Bogotá presented the alternative land registry pilot project in the town of San Onofre, in the presence of members of MOVICE, PBI, and several other accompanied organisations.

Franklin Castañeda, member of the Committee for Solidarity with Political Prisoners (CSPP), calls San Onofre in the Sucre region, a «symbolic place» because of the different ways land has been stolen in this area. According to Castañeda, techniques have included not only forced displacement, but also «enforced sales» or the falsification of land ownership titles. «It gives me great hope to see that two of the five phases of the pilot project in San Onofre are almost complete and that this process could serve as an example in other regions», affirms Castañeda.

The land registry project consists of a systematised inventory of properties, territories and jurisdictions, as well as a system to gather, administrate, update, process and make the information rela-

ting to land ownership public. The alternative land registry also offers the means to collectively develop, with the victims' direct participation, an inventory of stolen goods, and provides elements to «guarantee, through political and legal negotiation, the recuperation of lands, properties, cattle, crops, goods, and other tangible and intangible losses resulting from the armed conflict».<sup>1</sup>

According to MOVICE, three million people have lost their lands in Colombia, which «in superficial terms means some 10,000,000 hectares of land».<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "El Catastro Alternativo del Despojo – Proyecto Piloto de San Onofre".

<sup>2</sup> "Catastro alternativo, estrategia contra la impunidad y herramienta para la reparación integral", MOVICE, March 13th 2007

■ Barrancabermeja INTERVIEW with Mario Martinez, ACVC

# Declared innocent but the uncertainty remains

Mario Martinez is one of six members of the Peasant Farmers Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC), who were arrested in September 2007 and January 2008 respectively, on charges of rebellion. After spending more than six months in prison, Martínez was granted his freedom when the Office of the Attorney General ruled that his case had been closed due to lack of evidence. Martínez tells PBI how his organisation has faced the impacts of this period and of his plans for the future.

**PBI:** What is the current situation for leaders from the ACVC?

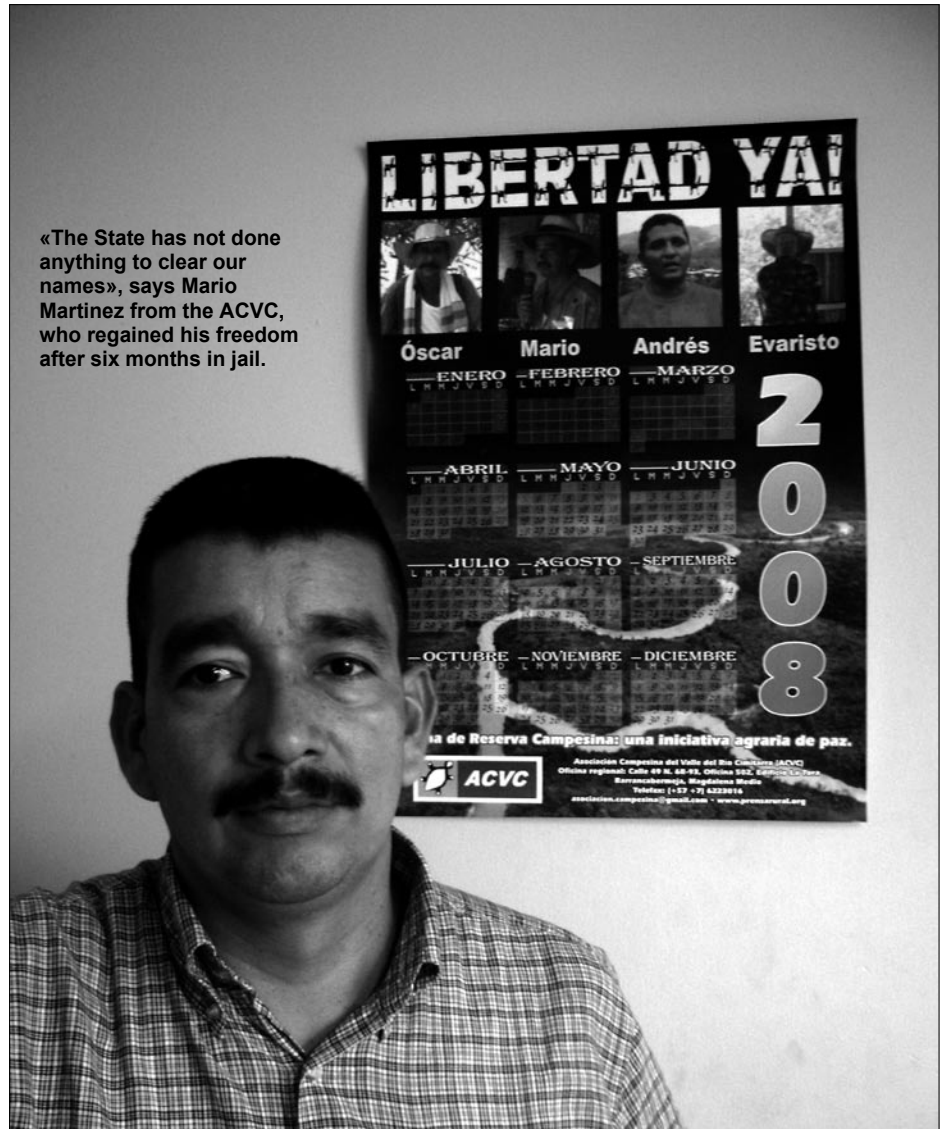
**Mario Martínez:** At the moment, I am the coordinator of the ACVC office, but in September 2007, the State Security Department (DAS), on orders from the 3rd Office of the Attorney General in Barrancabermeja, arrested me along with three other colleagues. Subsequently, on January 19th, another two colleagues were arrested. Three of the four people originally arrested were released on April 23rd, and one more person was released on May 19th. Four of us are currently free, with the other two still being held in prison in the city of Bucaramanga.

**What were the effects on the organisation and for you personally?**

The effects were huge, because we were members of the Association's board of directors. We had to resign, so that others could take on this role in the ACVC, because we are part of a process which has existed for 12 years, working with some 20,000 to 25,000 small farmers in the region.

**What measures did the State adopt to return your dignity to you, once you had been released from prison?**

The State has not done anything to clear our names: we were simply released and the 37th Office of the Attorney General said that the charges had been dropped. From then on, nothing more has been said. They were wrong, because when they arrested us they said we were funding the FARC and that damaged our reputations, not only as individuals, but as an organisation. We are concerned that after we were released, we discovered that



the 3rd Office of the Attorney General in Barrancabermeja has not yet suspended our arrest warrants. If the authorities ask us for our identity documents, and they see that we still have legal problems, they can arrest us again. We do not understand why the legal system works in this way, making it so difficult for us to travel to different towns and villages in rural areas. For two months now we have not been able to solve this problem, because the DAS says that it is the responsibility of the 3rd Office of the Attorney General, while the 37th Office of the Attorney General says it is the 37th Office of the Attorney General, and they say that the case is closed.

**What are your hopes for the future?**

On a personal level, the main thing I want to do is to continue working in the Association. We have been working in the ACVC for 12 years as a team in the field, and I have been a member of the board in the city for four years now, and there is no way we would ever think of leaving the process. We have never, not even for one minute, felt excluded by the people we work with, and since we have been released, we have had even more support, more solidarity from organisations, and national, international and regional organisations have come to visit us, to talk and to share experiences, and this has given us the encouragement to continue in this organisational process. ●

## ■ Barrancabermeja

# A decade of impunity

Ten years have passed since the massacre and disappearances carried out in the south-eastern neighbourhoods of Barrancabermeja, when paramilitaries arrived by access routes into the city, that was under the strict control of the army and the police, and murdered seven people and disappeared a further 25. One May 16th which will remain forever engraved in the minds and hearts of many people living in the city.

This year, organisations decided to commemorate the tenth anniversary of this crime. Events began at five in the morning with a march through the four affected areas, where songs celebrating life were performed in music, poetry and words, spoken by the victims' family members. Afterwards, a forum on impunity was

organised in an educational centre, with speeches from the 'José Alvear Restrepo' Lawyers' Collective, the Association of Family Members of the Detained – Disappeared, and the Movement of Victims of State Crimes.

Then the book *Not returned, but never really gone* was launched, in the Park for Life, and a documentary accompanying the book was shown. Both had a strong impact on the spectators gathered, due to the respectful way they document the lives of the family members of the victims of the 16th of May. The events also included a Gallery for Life showing portraits of those who were disappeared and murdered, religious ceremonies, and political and cultural acts, which all took place in the park. ●



PBI accompanied the Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS) and the Luis Carlos Pérez Lawyers' Collective (CALCP) during the commemoration

## ■ Europe

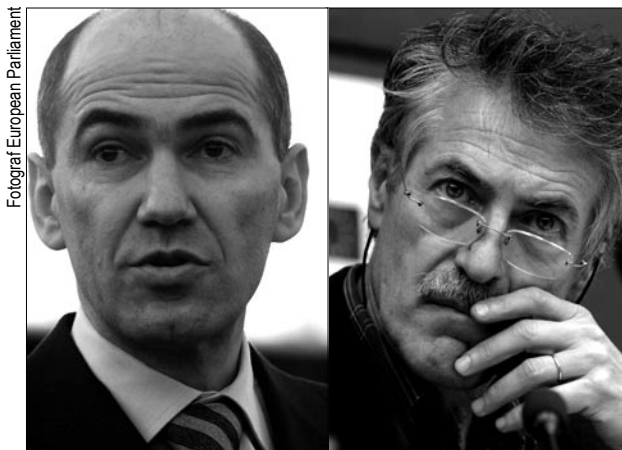
# Maximum support from European Institutions

The institutions of the European Union have expressed concerns over the serious situation for human rights defenders in Colombia over the last few months.

When threats were made against social leaders and human rights defenders, and several were murdered after taking part in the demonstration on March 6th held in homage to the victims of the paramilitaries, that same month 26 euro MPs wrote an open letter to the Colombian president, asking him to make a statement declaring his «clear support for the work of human rights defenders». These, politicians, including delegates from the European Parliament responsible for human rights, stated that the situation confirmed information indicating that the paramilitary phenomenon has not been overcome in Colombia.

«We believe that this situation corroborates information which claims that the paramilitary phenomenon has not been overcome in Colombia, since they have maintained their criminal capacity at the national level», the Euro MPs wrote.

Members of the European Parliament



Two politicians concerned about the human rights defenders in Colombia: Janez Jansa, the Prime Minister of Slovenia and Alain Lipietz, the president of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Andean Community.

are not the only ones to show concern over the situation in which Colombian human rights defenders live and work. On May 19th, Slovenia, who then held the presidency of the European Union, issued a public statement in which they voiced the concerns of the Member States of the European Union, plus another nine

signatory countries, making a total of 36 European states. In this statement, the highest power within the European Union emphasised the fact that the efforts being made by community leaders to build peace and to defend and promote human rights in Colombia are legitimate.

Furthermore, the statement expresses concerns over the appearance of criminal armed groups who currently hold territorial control over areas which were formerly controlled by the United Self-

Defence Forces of Colombia before they demobilised.

It also emphasises that «since 18 February 2008, five leaders and members of associations involved in Union programmes have paid the ultimate price for their commitment to their communities». ●



Eloyda Mejía, legal representative of the Association of Friends of Lago Izabal, accompanied by PBI since 2004, shared a long list of her colleagues who have been murdered for protecting their communities.

## ■ Country Groups

# Bio-fuels under scrutiny in the UK

**B**io-fuels would appear to respond perfectly to the demands imposed by the energy crisis and growing concerns over climate change. However, little by little the negative effects are beginning to gain weight in public opinion, showing that this «green alternative» causes irreparable damage to the environment, as well as serious human rights violations.

These were the conclusions of a number of representatives of international environmental and human rights organisations, academics and members of parliament, who, before an audience of 80 people in London described the

**«Not even butterflies are allowed to fly, now that they are seen as a threat to palm growth»**

negative impacts of bio-fuels, including deforestation and the division of ancestral communities.

Participants in the event, organised on 26 June by the PBI UK national group, included members of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission, an organisation accompanied by PBI in Colombia since 1994. Father Henry Soler described the displacement of Afro-Colombians

from the Cacarica river basin during Operation Genesis in 1997, which culminated in their lands being used by timber and single-crop banana companies. Ana María Lozano explained the problem of illegal palm plantations in Curbaradó, in the Chocó region of Colombia. She told of how over 28 species of animals have lost their natural habitat, several small rivers have dried out or been diverted, and how rivers have been contaminated by the pesticides used in palm plantations. «Not even the butterflies are allowed to fly, now that they are seen as a threat to palm growth», she emphasised. «Although the government has recognised the rights of small farmers to land ownership, and although there are currently 23 palm businessmen under investigation for stealing lands, to date all of the cases of murder, disappearance and displacement which took place over the past decade remain in impunity» Lozano reminded the audience.

It is not only in Colombia that the growth of palm has produced negative impacts. Kenneth Richards, from Friends of the Earth, reported that in the last ten years palm plantations in Indonesia have doubled in size, causing displacements, deforestation and placing traditional species such as the orangutan and the Sumatran tiger at risk of extinction.

Richards highlighted the fact that the European Union has set a goal of using 10% bio-fuels by the year 2020. «This would require using 220 million hectares of land solely for the growth of food crops destined to become bio-fuels», thereby further worsening the world food crisis, he specified.

Eloyda Mejía explained how in Guatemala ancient communities are facing problems caused by mining companies, despite the fact that more than 500,000 small farmers, fishermen and indigenous communities living around Lake Izabal have stated that they are against the exploitation of minerals in the region.

Mejía, legal representative of the Association of Friends of Lago Izabal, accompanied by PBI since 2004, shared a long list of her colleagues who have been murdered for protecting their communities. «I would like to thank Peace Brigades, because if it was not for their accompaniment my name would certainly be on this list», said Mejía as she described a plan carried out by the mining company to assassinate her.

She is currently facing legal proceedings, in which she is accused of stealing lands. She believes this is yet another way of persecuting and intimidating her, in an attempt to make her give up her work against the mining company. ●

■ Personal

## A summary of the thousand and one experiences of Annemarie de Vries, volunteer in the Bogotá team June 2007 – June 2008:



E X P E R I E N C E I B S L O  
 W T N E V E M O T I O N H F B  
 D J I B R W D N L E B I T E S  
 S K N A H T A Y A N O J A B E  
 L E N M O C H K M N G F E L R  
 H A D M I R A T I O N S F E S O J R O V  
 C A S L A S U K M I H O P E D T B H B A  
 K G A U A S H P T O A M T B T  
 R E C C H J A R I H K O O Y I  
 O C O N A N M W N U A G D I O  
 W A N F I G M I G O N U I N N  
 M W S M O T O T A X I U C O O K I N G P  
 A H E P E N C A D K J A N A L I S I S E  
 E N N K M O K P I H S D N E I R F O E M  
 T H S P E M B A S S I E S M G N I K C G  
 R T U C R S O D A L N E W S P A P E R N  
 U G S K G C O V O C R L A B A R U D O I  
 J N T N E M E C A L P S I D F E B I F R  
 I E M E N L J S N E F R G D A  
 L R N O C A T A P N T I 4 E H  
 L T B M Y R E P O R T S 2 M S  
 O S P O H S K R O W U E G R A  
 E N O I T A R I P S N I C A T



Accompaniment  
 Admiration  
 Analysis  
 Armed Forces  
 Bajo Naya  
 Bogota  
 Consensus  
 Cassave

Cooking  
 Casanare  
 Displacement  
 Event  
 Emotion  
 Experience  
 Embassies  
 Emergency

Friendship  
 G24  
 Hammock  
 Hope  
 Inspiration  
 Lobbying  
 Mototaxi  
 Meeting

NGO  
 Newspaper  
 Observation  
 Patacon  
 Reports  
 Sharing  
 Strength  
 Salsa

Threats  
 Teamwork  
 Thanks  
 Trujillo  
 UN  
 Uraba  
 Workshop

**Top photograph:** «Accompanying the 'rescue' of the CIJP Missionary Team in Bajo Naya in March after they received serious threats. It is an area on the border between the Cauca and Valle de Cauca regions.»

**Middle photograph:** «During a three week stay in Urabá to learn about the processes we accompany. I had the opportunity to meet some very special people in those processes. These two children were crazy about Hip Hop.»

**Bottom photograph:** «Accompanying a lawyer from CCAJAR in Montes de Maria, a region with minimal infrastructure; during this year I have accompanied on planes, buses, taxis, motorbikes, canoes and motorboats.»

«Thank you PBI for this impressive and inspiring year!»



[www.pbi-colombia.org](http://www.pbi-colombia.org)

Protecting human  
rights defenders in  
Colombia since 1994

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is a Non Governmental Organisation registered with the United Nations which since 1994 has a permanent team of international observers/accompaniment in Colombia. Its aim is to protect the space of legally recognised human rights defenders, who suffer repression for their non violent work on behalf of human rights.

To achieve this objective, the PBI Colombia Team accompanies (always through local petition) people or organisations who are threatened, distributes information on the evolution of the conflict, and carries out advocacy and lobbying activities with civil and military authorities, as well as with state organisms, NGOs, the Church, diplomats and other organisations, promoting international action.

If you consider that PBI's presence is useful to protect the persons who work on behalf of human rights, you could:

- Support us financially, as an individual or through an organisation
- Join the PBI group closest to you. Support the international network from your city
- Become a PBI volunteer (regardless of origin, race, sexual orientation or religion)

**The volunteer Alex Therry  
from Belgium, accompanying  
the Inter-church Justice and  
Peace Commission in Uraba.**



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