

15 March 2007

HRC4: Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Colombia

Thank you, Mr President.

We wish to refer to the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in Colombia, specifically as it concerns women.

As the report points out, the human rights of displaced persons (...) have not been respected as the Constitution demands, and a grave humanitarian crisis persists with respect to these persons. The situation of the indigenous and afro-Colombian communities in the country continues to be critical with the displacement of these communities, and we know that women and children take the brunt of the consequences.

The report also shows that "in some regions of the country, the human rights defenders and their organizations have suffered restrictions to their work as a consequence of threats they have received".

In the first two months of 2007 attacks have increased on women's groups that defend the rights of women and their communities and provide legal and material aid to displaced families.

1. A Community Center of the League of Displaced Women in Turbaco (close to Cartagena), was attacked and destroyed by fire on 20 January 2007. Leading to this event, the League of Displaced Women received threats and was victim to serious human rights violations and the continuous harassment of its leaders.
2. A relative of a member of the Popular Organization of Women (OFP) in Barrancabermeja, was abducted and released in order to intimidate and silence the organization from drawing further attention to human rights violations in the region.

With respect to the "Peace and Justice Law" (Law 975/2005), the report says that: "the mechanisms to guarantee the rights of the victims of the paramilitaries are insufficient". For instance, a woman who defended the rights of 700 peasants in the process of recovery of their land from which they had been displaced, was murdered on January 31, 2007 in front of her family in Montería.

As the report affirms: "the institutional response to victims, with differential and gender perspective, continues to be a strong challenge for authorities". We believe the human rights violations related to the violence and armed conflict in Colombia will continue, unless all

serious and concrete efforts are maintained to monitor, report and address the human rights crisis in the country.

Thank you, Mr President.