



**Colombia  
MINISTERIO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES**



**Prensa**

**INTERVENTION BY FRANCISCO SANTOS CALDERÓN,  
VICE-PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA, IN THE 7th SESSION OF THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Geneva, March 3, 2008**

Ladies and gentlemen:

I attend this Assembly on behalf of one of the most affected countries in the world by terrorism: Colombia. Our nation is one of the oldest and most stable democracies of the Continent, yet a few years ago we had reached the highest homicide and kidnapping indices of the region.

In a five year term, the Government I represent gave back security and attained a reduction of violence indicators to levels without precedents. A Government that achieved the recovery of self-confidence of the Colombian people and the confidence of the world in Colombia. Our economy is growing. Our country moves forward. I represent a country of thriving and courageous people decided to eradicate the violence and terrorism that impels a minority of illegal armed groups financed by of drug trafficking money.

At this time, when the process of institutional construction of Human Rights is on probation, the people of the world expect that this Council remains committed to human rights in an integral manner; that it carries out an exercise committed to human dignity and not with political interests or applying selective criteria; committed to freedoms without any limitation and to perform its work unbiased, in an objective and transparent manner.

Colombia has been one of the most scrutinized countries recently regarding human rights; not always in a fair and objective way. I wish to share with you some of the recent progress:

- Voluntarily we postulated ourselves to be examined under the Universal Periodic Review. We thank the Council the acceptance of such proposal. We are working in the process of

preparing our Report and we deem that this is an opportunity to share our actions and to receive the contribution of the civil society and of the international community.

- As from 2007 and until 2010, the Colombian State invests US 500 million dollars every year to provide assistance for the internally displaced population.
- In September 2007 we established the Protection Program for victims and witnesses under the enforcement of the Law of Justice and Peace, with a budget of 9 million dollars.
- During 2005 to 2007 we redressed the victims of violence in a sum of 230 million dollars.
- The National Government and the National Commission for Compensation and Reconciliation carry out open consultations in order to establish a Compensation Program through administrative channels.
- We issued the decree to regulate the Regional Compensation Commissions of goods and we expect to implement it this year.
- There are 126.000 claims of victims within the process of enforceability of the Law of Justice and Peace currently under process in order to satisfy their rights of truth, justice and redress.
- During 2007, our justice system received 1,036 free representations of individuals subject to the Law of Justice and Peace and 1,257 corpses of disappeared people were exhumed.
- In order to strengthen the research ability of judicial offices 1,133 permanent new posts and 753 temporary posts were created.
- Last year we captured 1,943 people belonging to criminal groups who sought to create new groups as the auto-defense groups were demobilized. Other 619 died while offering resistance to the action by the authorities. Leaders of these groups have been captured.
- In order to facilitate its work 33 new posts were created supporting the Supreme Court of Justice, which carries out investigations against senior public officials with constitutional privileges.
- The Ministry of National Defense has adopted and promulgated the Integral Policy of Human Rights for the Public Forces, whose Basic lines are Instruction, Operational Discipline, Legal Defense, Assistance for vulnerable groups and Cooperation for the prevention, protection and justice.

- Last October 29 an increase of 30% of the participation in regional elections was observed, compared to the elections carried out in 2004.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the role of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in these achievements. Last year we received several visits of its officers to Colombia and jointly, we carried out a reflection exercise during the tenth anniversary of presence of the Office in Colombia. We have worked in an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. Last September 9<sup>th</sup> we were pleased to receive her personal visit to Colombia and we have extended the Agreement guaranteeing the presence of the Office until 2010. We feel confident that this dialogue, as well as the extension of the Agreement shall allow us to develop a joint work to help overcome the challenges that our State and society are facing for the future.

As Vice-President of Colombia, and as a former victim of kidnapping, I wish to share with you the happiness caused by the release of three women and three Colombian men during the past weeks, after more than five years of captivity by a group that has been labeled as terrorist by the European Union, Canada and the United States, the FARC. As Gloria Polanco informed from the "Palacio de Miraflores" in Caracas, Venezuela, a few minutes after being freed, the kidnapped people had been kept subject to subhuman conditions, chained and without any medical care, situation that resembles the concentration camps.

The good news is that they returned alive to freedom. Yet a concern and an affront for Colombians is the fact that there are still more than 700 hundred people kidnapped by the FARC, from which we know nothing about their situation. The FARC have converted kidnapping in a lucrative way to finance its criminal activities along with drug trafficking, and a mean to blackmail Colombian society and its institutions, as well as the international community. Between 1996 and 2007, they have kidnapped 6,800 people, 304 children, of which at least 346 have died in captivity.

Last February 4<sup>th</sup> the Colombian society carried out a massive protest demonstration in all the cities of our country and in more than 100 cities worldwide to condemn the violence of the FARC against Colombians, and to demand the immediate freedom of all the kidnapped without any conditioning whatsoever.

Seeking the liberation of our kidnapped compatriots our government has turned to the good offices or mediation of national and international important personalities as well as the United Nations system. We have proposed to carry out dialogues in any Colombian Church, in any diplomatic venue, abroad and in two regions of our country. Moreover, in December 13, 2005 we accepted the proposal called "Security System for a Humanitarian Meeting in the Central Mountain Range", drafted by emissaries of France, Switzerland and Spain. Such proposal established an area of 180 square kilometers with guaranteed access corridors, international presence and mechanisms to develop eventual conversations. This proposal was submitted simultaneously to the FARC and to the Government, who accepted it forthwith; the FARC denied its receipt, and evidencing their lie, they rejected it.

Unilaterally, in December 2, 2004 the Colombian Government freed 27 prisoner guerrilla FARC members and in June 2007, other 125. Last June 4<sup>th</sup> we freed one of their leaders, Rodrigo Granda, by request of Nicolás Sarkozy, President of France.

We have demonstrated our will, our initiative and persistence to attain freedom of the people kidnapped. The response has been the arrogant obstinacy and the premeditated assassination. The Governor of the Department of Antioquia, Guillermo Gaviria, the former minister Gilberto Echeverri Mejía and 8 officers of the Public Force were cowardly assassinated. In June 2007 10 Members of the Council of the Department of El Valle were murdered. The report of international forensic experts concluded that they died executed with killing shots made at short distance. Major Julián Ernesto Guevara also died in captivity and his corpse has not been returned.

Today we turn to the good offices of France, Switzerland, Spain and the Catholic Church to manage contacts that may allow us to free the kidnapped people. We have proposed the creation of a meeting zone in an area that does not affect the population and the normal operation of the institutions. We are committed to provide all the security guarantees agreed, with international presence and verification.

The dreadful conditions to which they are subject demand their immediate liberation. I request you to listen to the clamor of million of voices demanding the end of this and all the kidnappings in Colombia and I invoke your commitment to human rights for:

- Condemning kidnapping as a crimes against humanity;
- Demanding the immediate unconditional liberation of all kidnapped people, in the same manner that Mrs. Louise Arbour, High Commissioner for Human Rights has firmly demanded in several opportunities.

The Colombian people cannot expect less from the international community when the rights of its citizens are abused. Any silence today, or the justification of such cruel treatment is not coherent with the values forged by humanity.

Honorable Secretary of the United Nations,

Resolution 1373 of the United Nations Security Council demands all Status binding undertakings for the fight against terrorism. Demands that all States “Deny safe haven to those who finance, plan, support, or commit terrorist acts” and “Prevent those who finance, plan, facilitate or commit terrorist acts from using their respective territories for those purposes against other States or their citizens”. In our continent there are governments who willfully breach such mandatory obligations. There’s ample evidence on this issue that has been made public. Thus, we invite all countries of the international community, specially our neighbors, to have a gesture of solidarity with the fight against terrorism undertaken by Colombia and to take the necessary measures in order to implement the commitments acquired through the resolutions issued by the United Nations as well as by the international treaties.

Colombia is a country fond of peace, respectful of the Charter of the United Nations and faithful to International Law. We have never been an adventurous country military or politically. We have been respectful of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of the States. We have never intended to expand any principle different than Democracy whatsoever. We do not accept any provocation that may jeopardize the stability of the region. But let there be no misunderstanding we shall continue to be firm in the fight against the worldwide drug problem and against terrorism, within the due respect to Human Rights and International Law.

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