

AI Index: PRE 01/256/2008  
28 October 2008

## **Colombia: ‘Leave us in peace!’ Targeting civilians in the internal armed conflict - FACTS AND FIGURES**

### **Killings of civilians**

- More than 70,000 people, the majority of them civilians, have been killed in Colombia’s armed conflict over the past 20 years.
- At least 1,400 civilians were killed in 2007 (around 1,300 in 2006), compared with a recent high of 4,000 in 2002.
- Of those cases where the perpetrator is known, in 2007 paramilitaries were responsible for at least 300 killings of civilians in 2007, security forces for around 330 and guerilla groups for some 260 civilian killings. The remaining 500 or so killings could not be attributed to any specific group

### **Displacement**

- Between 3 and 4 million Colombians have been forcibly displaced from their homes over the past 20 years – making this the second highest internal displacement rate in the world, after Sudan.
- The number of people forcibly displaced by the conflict continues to increase. As many as 305,000 people were displaced in 2007. Some 270,000 were also forcibly displaced in the first half of 2008, a 41% increase on the same period in 2007.

### **Enforced Disappearances**

- Between 15,000 and 30,000 people have been the victims of enforced disappearances since the start of the conflict.
- In 2007, at least 190 people were victims of enforced disappearances by the security forces and paramilitaries or missing following abductions by guerrilla groups, compared to around 180 in 2006; 150 in 2005; 290 in 2004; 500 in 2003 and 450 in 2002.

### **Kidnappings**

- More than 20,000 people have been kidnapped or taken hostage in the last 10 years.
- The number of kidnappings has fallen, from a recent high of 3,570 in 2000 to just over 520 in 2007. Between January and May 2008, 188 people were kidnapped.
- The FARC were responsible for some 120 kidnappings in 2007 and the ELN for 27 cases, while 245 kidnappings were attributed to “common criminals” and 126 cases could not be attributed to any specific group.

## **Torture**

- Some 80 cases of torture were reported in 2007; around 45 of the victims were killed.
- Of the cases where the perpetrator is known, the security forces were responsible for 60 per cent of the total, paramilitaries for 27 per cent, and guerrilla groups for around 11 per cent.

## **Land Mines**

- Colombia has the highest number of landmine victims in the world. Guerrilla groups are responsible for most land mines.
- In 2007 there were 884 victims of landmines – 193 of whom died of their injuries. This was a slight decrease from 2006 when 1,167 people were victims of landmines. There were 334 victims of land mines and abandoned munitions in January-May 2008.

## **Trade Unionists**

- In 2007, 39 trade union members were killed or were the victims of enforced disappearance, compared to 77 in 2006. However, at least 40 trade union were killed in the first eight months of 2008, more than the total number in the whole of 2007.

## **Child soldiers**

- Estimates suggest there are between 8,000 and 13,000 child soldiers in Colombia, recruited both by guerrilla groups and the paramilitaries.

## **Paramilitary demobilization**

- Despite the government-sponsored paramilitary demobilization process, paramilitary groups continue to be active in various parts of the country.
- In 2007, the National Reparation and Reconciliation Commission referred to 3,500-5,000 combatants belonging to “dissident, rearmed, and emerging” groups operating in 200 municipalities (out of 1,098) in 22 departments in the country.
- Also in 2007, the Organization of American States’ Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP-OEA) suggested that 22 groups with around 3,000 combatants had re-emerged, led by middle-ranking paramilitary leaders, and consisting mainly of supposedly demobilized rank-and-file paramilitaries.

## **Guerrilla Groups**

- Two main guerrilla groups still operate in Colombia – the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the smaller National Liberation Army. Both groups are responsible for widespread human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

## **Justice and Peace Process**

- Only about 10 per cent of the more than 31,000 paramilitaries that are said to have demobilized have qualified for inclusion in the Justice and Peace process, which grants them judicial benefits in return for disclosure about their involvement in human rights violations.
- Around 90 per cent of demobilized paramilitaries have benefited from de facto amnesties by virtue of Decree 128, which grants pardons to members of illegal armed groups who are not under investigation for human rights abuses and/or have not been convicted of such crimes.
- Since the paramilitaries began giving evidence before the Justice and Peace Units, at least 15 people associated with the Justice and Peace process have been killed and around 200 threatened. The victims have included those seeking justice for human rights abuses committed against them or their families and those

representing or supporting the victims.

- More than 60 parliamentarians – most of whom are part of President Uribe's governing coalition in Congress – were at the time of writing under formal or preliminary investigation by the Supreme Court of Justice for their suspected links to paramilitary groups.

END/