

WEBSITE ACTION AMR 23/138/2002

Based on the document, *Security at what cost? The Government's Failure to Confront the Human Rights Crisis* (AMR 23/132/2002) being issued on 10 December 2002.

WEB ACTION

COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES AGGRAVATING THE HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

Since coming to office in August 2002, the security measures being adopted by President Álvaro Uribe's government are threatening to increase the humanitarian tragedy and to aggravate the human rights crisis in Colombia.

Amnesty International is challenging the government's policies which are :

- undermining the strong institutional human rights safeguards and mechanisms introduced over the last decade**
- dragging the civilian population further into the conflict**
- threatening to strengthen the presence of paramilitarism in the country**
- placing human rights defenders at increased risk**
- threatening to undermine the capacity of international human rights and humanitarian organizations to effectively carry out their legitimate work**

The Colombian government cannot use the abuses of International Humanitarian Law committed by guerrilla forces as an excuse not to take action on human rights.

The main victims in this tragedy are the civilian population. They are paying a heavy price for the government's failure to implement UN recommendations.

The Colombian government is reinforcing a wall of silence behind which human rights violations can be committed unseen and unheard.

Speak out – break down the wall of silence

ACT NOW!

Write to President Álvaro Uribe Vélez (in Spanish if possible) along the following lines:

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to you to express my concern about the security measures that you have introduced since taking office in August 2002 which are only serving to seriously aggravate an already appalling humanitarian tragedy in Colombia.

These measures are violating human rights standards, strengthening impunity and dragging the civilian population further into the conflict.

In particular, I am concerned about a series of measures your administration is proposing to introduce which threaten to undermine the strong institutional human rights safeguards and mechanisms introduced over the last decade, such as the Constitutional Court and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (*Defensoría del Pueblo*).

As well as declaring a state of emergency (*Estado de Conmoción Interior*) your government has approved related decrees which threaten the basic human rights of ordinary Colombians

and undermine the capacity of international human rights and humanitarian organizations to effectively carry out their legitimate work in the country.

Your government's decision to create a million-strong network of civilian informers, and its proposal to establish a 150,000-strong part-time army of "peasant soldiers" will serve not only to drag the civilian population further into the conflict, but threatens to strengthen the presence of paramilitarism in the country.

While on the one hand your government has expressed its support for human rights defenders in Colombia, your policies are also calling into question the legitimacy of human rights work, thus placing human rights defenders at increased risk of revenge attacks by the security forces and their paramilitary allies.

Your government should not use the abuses of International Humanitarian Law committed by guerrilla forces as an excuse not to take action on human rights and I urge you and the guerrilla groups to sign a humanitarian agreement which would represent a first step in removing civilians from the conflict.

The civilian population is paying a heavy price for your government's introduction of new security measures and for your failure to implement UN recommendations.

I therefore urge you to elaborate an action plan which places human rights at its centre and acknowledges that security is not possible without full respect for human rights.

Appeals should be sent to :

President of Colombia

Sr. Presidente Álvaro Uribe Appeals should be sent to :

President of Colombia

Sr. Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Presidente de la República

Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No. 7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Fax : +57 1 342 0592

- **Write to your Foreign Ministry** [find the address of your Ministry of Foreign Affairs] reiterating the points above and urging your government to:
 - insist that the Colombian government immediately implements UN recommendations;
 - play an active role in ensuring that human rights and Amnesty International's concerns regarding President Uribe's security measures are at the forefront of any discussions they have with the Colombian government.
- **Write to the Colombian embassy in your country** [find the address] and raise your concerns with them.

ACT NOW!

CHALLENGE PRESIDENT URIBE'S GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA!