



WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

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To: Foreign policy aides for members of the U.S. House of Representatives
From: Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli and Jessica Eby, Washington Office on Latin America
Date: June 6, 2007

Re: Co-sponsorship of H. Res. 426 on Colombian IDPs

WOLA encourages your boss to sign-on as a cosponsor of H. Res. 426, a bipartisan resolution to recognize 2007 as the Year of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Colombia and urge increased U.S. and international humanitarian assistance for Colombia's IDPs. To read the full text of H. Res. 426, click [here](#). Current sponsors of the resolution, introduced by Rep. James McGovern, are: Pitts, Engel, Lantos, Wolf, Smith, Payne, McCollum, Rush, Lynch, Baldwin, Wexler, Sutton, Farr, Fattah, DeLauro, Schakowsky, Watson, Jackson-Lee, Gutierrez, Woolsey, Hinchey, Lee, McDermott, Moore, and Kucinich.

Colombia's population of 3.8 million IDPs is the second largest in the world, after Sudan. Internal displacement is occurring at an alarming rate in Colombia due to the ongoing internal armed conflict there, and violence and threats from armed groups force approximately 200,000 Colombian civilians – more than half of them women and children – to flee their homes every year. Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities have been especially hard hit by internal displacements, threatening these unique ethnic groups with cultural extinction. Despite these adverse circumstances, some communities of IDPs are highly organized and have created good proposals for how to address their protection and assistance needs.

H. Res. 426 sends the message that the United States has not forgotten the victims of Colombia's internal armed conflict. Stripped of their lands in the rural areas that many of them once called home, IDPs have become the poorest of the poor in Colombia's urban centers. Overcrowded and dangerous slums – where illegal armed groups continue to operate – on the outskirts of cities like Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, Barrancabermeja, and Buenaventura are now where many IDPs call home. In addition to the millions of internally displaced in Colombia, CODHES¹ estimates there to be a quarter of a million Colombians who have fled and are now living in countries like Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, and the United States.

Despite this large-scale human rights and humanitarian crisis, the Colombian government has not fully implemented guidelines for protection and assistance to IDPs as mandated by the Colombian Constitutional Court. The U.S. has provided Colombia with more than \$5 billion in aid over the past six years; yet the great majority (80%) of this has gone to support military and counter-narcotics programs, with only a small percentage (20%) is for humanitarian, social, and economic aid. **H. Res. 426 urges increased U.S., Colombian, and international attention and assistance to the internally displaced in Colombia.**

To sign-on as a cosponsor of H. Res. 426 or for more information, please contact Cindy Buhl in Rep. McGovern's office at 5-6101 or cindy.buhl@mail.house.gov. For more information on IDPs in Colombia, please visit www.wola.org/idp.

¹ Consultancy for Human Rights and Internal Displacement, CODHES www.codhes.org