

# WOLA annual report 2010



Ted Lieberman

WASHINGTON OFFICE



ON LATIN AMERICA

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*\* Indicates that the supporter also sponsored WOLA's 2010 gala.*



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# WOLA: What We Do

**OUR MISSION:** WOLA promotes human rights, democracy, and social justice by working with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to shape policies in the United States and abroad.

**OUR VISION:** WOLA envisions a future where human rights and social justice are the foundation for public policy in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the U.S. relationship with the region; where change happens when people on the ground connect with people who make policy; and where people work together across borders to respect human rights and democratic values.

- ▶ **WOLA connects with partners in Latin America and the Caribbean**, analyzing regional events, trends, and challenges, and acting quickly to ensure that a broad range of voices are heard.

*WOLA's history of listening to Latin American voices leads*

*human rights defenders, democracy activists, and others working for social justice to turn to WOLA with information and on-the-ground perspectives.*

- ▶ **WOLA impacts policy in the United States and abroad** by developing key contacts with government officials and multi-lateral organizations.

*WOLA's testimony at congressional hearings, briefings on key issues, informed policy recommendations, and access to key decision-makers help promote dialogue and alternative policy perspectives.*

- ▶ **WOLA shapes public debate and raises new issues** through outreach to traditional and new media; sponsorship of public events with scholars, officials, and grassroots activists; and original research, analysis, and commentary by a staff with decades of cumulative experience in Latin America and the Caribbean.

*WOLA's online resources, background briefings, publications, memos, and delegations to and from the region are important sources of timely, authoritative*

## CONTENTS

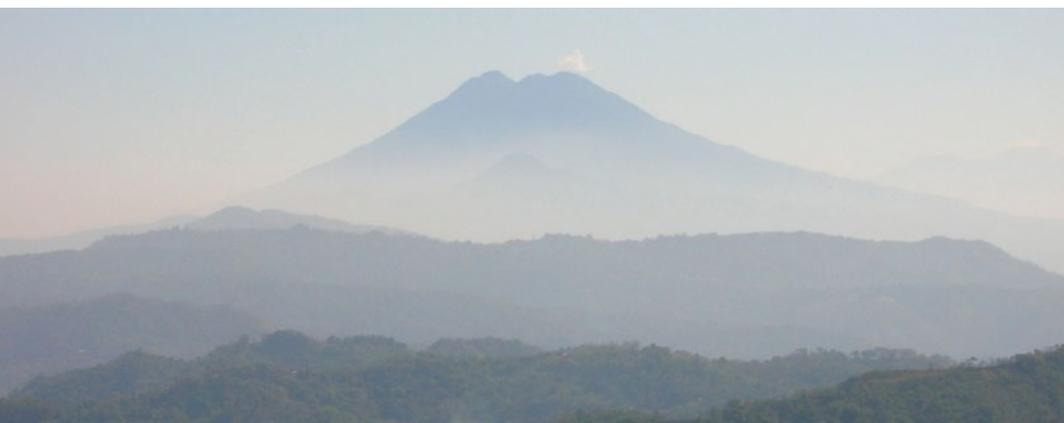
- 2 Supporters, Donors, Friends
- 3 What We Do
- 4 Michelle Bachelet Accepts WOLA Award
- 5 Partners in the Region
- 6 Putting a Human Face on the "War on Drugs"
- 7 Delegation to Mexico
- 8 Highlights of WOLA's Analysis and Advocacy
- 10 Financial Statements
- 12 Board of Directors and Staff

*information for journalists, scholars, policymakers, and the public.*

- ▶ **WOLA serves as a key resource for civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean**, working with colleagues in the region on coalition-building, networking,

research, advocacy, and participation in policy debates.

*WOLA's commitment to human rights, democracy, and social justice and its collaborative style help to find common ground for action with allies in the region and help our partners gain a greater understanding of U.S. policy.*



## **Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet Accepts WOLA Human Rights Award**

Michelle Bachelet has had a career of firsts—the first woman elected president of Chile; the first female Minister of Defense in any country in the Americas; and now the first Under-Secretary-General of the newly created UN Women, the highest level international agency for gender equity and women’s empowerment.

Having survived torture, imprisonment, and exile during the Pinochet regime, Bachelet went on to become a physician, a defender of human rights, and a pioneering political leader. President Bachelet

has been described as “a champion for those who have not always had a voice” and a “transformational president who created positive and enduring social change.”

Human rights were a major theme of Bachelet’s presidency (2006–10). She saw truth and justice as the foundation for social reconciliation and an affirmation of Chile’s future. She gave sustained support to judicial investigations and prosecutions, and personal leadership to symbolic reparations: a new Museum of Memory and more

than 100 monuments remembering the dictatorship’s victims. Some 300 individuals have been convicted for human rights crimes, and over 400 active cases involving nearly 800 former regime agents are currently in the hands of investigating magistrates.

WOLA was founded in 1974 in response to the *coup* in Chile on

September 11, 1973, and worked throughout the dictatorship to defend human rights.

In accepting the WOLA Human Rights Award, Bachelet spoke of its “moral significance” noting that “this distinction is associated with the most noble cause of our times—the defense and the struggle for human rights.”

## Highlighting our Partners in the Region

### **AFRODES – Association of Internally Displaced Colombians honored at WOLA gala**

Founded in 1999 by civil rights activist Marino Córdoba—who, after a foiled attempt on his life, was later forced to flee to the United States—AFRODES is an umbrella organization of over 60 internally displaced Afro-Colombian groups from 24 cities in Colombia.

After decades of internal armed conflict, nearly 10 percent of Colombia’s population has been uprooted from their homes and communities. With over four million internally displaced people (IDPs), Colombia has the world’s second highest number after Sudan.

AFRODES has made Afro-Colombian displacement and territorial rights a prominent issue within Colombia and internationally by promoting the rights of IDPs within the Inter-American system, the U.S. Congress, the United Nations, and as far away as South Africa.

The work of AFRODES led to the January 2009 passage of

Colombian Constitutional Court Order 005, protecting the rights of Afro-Colombian IDPs, ordering the government to prevent further displacement, and requiring it to remedy the situation of those already displaced. AFRODES has documented the abuse of thousands of internally displaced Afro-Colombians, and they lead



PHILLIP BLANCHARD

the National Working Table for Displaced Persons, which is responsible for dialogue between the Colombian government and IDP organizations.

WOLA has worked with AFRODES since 2006 on changing U.S. aid legislation to increase protection and assistance to Colombia's displaced. Our collaboration has included facilitating meetings with Members of Congress and other policymakers and working for the promotion of three resolutions in the House of Representatives addressing the concerns of the Afro-Colombian and displaced communities.

We were proud to present our 2010 Human Rights Award to AFRODES, a group that is making a difference in thousands of people's lives, even at great risk to its leaders.



## Putting a Human Face on the Damage of the "War on Drugs"

The human stories of the "war on drugs" often go unseen and unacknowledged. In July 2010, we began using a new tool to better document the toll of unjust drug laws. With the Transnational Institute (TNI), we produced a series of video interviews telling the personal stories of individuals who have spent years in prison enduring harsh sentences disproportionate to the minor crimes they committed.

Videos produced so far focus on Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Argentina. Some of the videos were filmed inside prisons with inmates who shared their experience of inhumane conditions

and the impact on their families of their long-term incarceration.

Across the region, archaic drug laws have led to overwhelmed criminal justice systems, prisons overcrowded with petty offenders, and unduly long prison sentences for minor crimes.

WOLA has worked for years to change this. We are promoting more effective and less harmful drug policies in Latin America, just as we criticize the ineffective and often counter-productive "war on drugs" that the United States has funded throughout the region.

The videos can be found at [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org)—WOLA's newly designed website.



## Convening Across Borders: Delegation to Mexico— May 2010

WOLA led a delegation of congressional staff and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives to Tlapa, Guerrero, Mexico, and Mexico City to look at security issues, particularly the impact of the Mexican government's counter-drug strategy and the ways in which U.S. foreign assistance addresses Mexico's security crisis.

We met not only with Mexican and U.S. government officials but also with Mexican human rights organizations. Participants saw first hand the complicated nature of doing human rights work in a context where drug production, trafficking, and organized crime are prevalent.

One of the highlights of the trip was spending time with WOLA's partner, the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center. Tlachinollan Director Abel Barrera, staff, and victims of abuse discussed the human rights situation in the mountain region of Guerrero, the changing dynamics due to the

Mexican government's counter-drug operations, and Tlachinollan's efforts to engage with police and military authorities in the state. They also presented the work of the Civilian Monitor of the Police and Other Security Forces, an independent office co-founded by Tlachinollan that monitors and documents abuse by all security forces operating in the region and seeks a resolution to these abuses for the victims.

WOLA board member and organized crime expert Morris Panner joined us on the delegation, talking with the lawyers at Tlachinollan about organized crime investigations. He also spoke with the U.S. embassy about bringing members of the human rights community into trainings on organized crime.

*“WOLA does a better job than any organization working in Latin America in working with local human rights activists. The WOLA team knows who to talk to and has partnered with leaders in the field. I couldn't have imagined a better insight into the tough problems of citizen activism in the face of organized crime than that provided by WOLA and its local partners.”*

—Morris Panner, WOLA board member



## Highlights of WOLA's Analysis and Advocacy in 2010



VANESSA GARCIA BLANCA

***A Dangerous Journey through Mexico: Human Rights Violations against Migrants in Transit*** documents how migrants, primarily Central Americans, are often beaten, extorted, sexually abused, and kidnapped by criminal groups while they travel through Mexico on their way to the United States. The analysis points to the failure of the Mexican government to protect migrants in transit and shows the direct participation or acquiescence of Mexican authorities in several cases of abuse. Drawing from the work of migrants' rights organizations, the report includes testimonies of three migrants who were kidnapped by criminal groups in Mexico. The report was produced in collaboration with the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh).

***Systems Overload: Drug Laws and Prisons in Latin America*** is a comparative study of the impact of drug policies on the prison systems in eight Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. The research, which is unprecedented in its scope, reveals that drug laws have contributed to the crises of prison overcrowding in these countries. Existing drug laws often impose penalties disproportionate to the offenses committed, do not give consideration to the use of alternative sanctions, and promote the use of preventive detention. The study found that those who are incarcerated for drug offenses tend to be low-level offenders whose apprehension has little impact on the drug trade. Published with the Transnational Institute (TNI) the research was presented at a conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and is part of our on-going work on drug policy reform.



***Preach What You Practice: The Separation of Police and Military Roles in the Americas*** provides historical background and rationale for the distinction between military and police functions. The report documents how in Latin America, where democracies have struggled to exert civilian control over their armed forces, most nations lack a principle of clear military-police separation. Today, many Latin American governments call on militaries to enforce domestic laws and to combat crime. The report makes the case that the United States should

stop encouraging the military forces of other countries to take on roles that would be illegal for the U.S. armed forces to carry out at home. The authors, a team of WOLA's regional security policy experts, set out specific steps to be taken by both the United States and countries in the region. This study was released to coincide with the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, where WOLA's regional security policy team distributed it to the top defense officials in the hemisphere.

***Abused and Afraid in Ciudad Juarez: An Analysis of Human Rights Violations by the Military in Mexico***

documents how residents in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, are caught between the drug-related violence and the human rights violations committed by security forces. The analysis, produced in collaboration with the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh), focuses on human rights violations that occurred in Ciudad Juarez in the context of Joint Operation Chihuahua, which began in March 2008. The five cases described in the report involve acts of torture, forced disappearance, and sexual harassment of women by Mexican soldiers.



AP PHOTO/MIGUEL TOVAR

***“Next Congress Must Acknowledge Changes in Latin America”*** is testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on December 2, 2010, given by WOLA Executive Director Joy Olson. In it, she delineates shifts in the political landscape in Latin America and challenges lawmakers to learn how to “play by the new rules of the hemisphere.” She urged Congress to refocus on the link between migration and development, explore new ways of thinking about drug policy, and pursue more collaborative responses to shared problems. She also warned against taking polarized, black and white views, asserting that “U.S. political polarization distorts understanding, diminishes our credibility, and complicates our relationship with Latin America.”

***Change in Our Interest: Travel, Trade and Improved Relations with Cuba*** is a comprehensive compendium of information documenting how restrictions on travel and trade harm the national interests of the United States. It makes the argument that reforming this policy is consistent with our values, our economic interests, and efforts to improve the U.S. image abroad. The packet was distributed to congressional offices as part of WOLA's work with a coalition advocating an easing of travel restrictions to Cuba.



AP PHOTO/CRISTÓBAL HERRERA

# Financial Statements

WOLA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES *for the year ending December 31, 2010*

## Revenue

Grants and contracts	\$849,255
Contributions	\$354,429
Other Income	\$42,177
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,245,861</b>

## Expenses

Program Services	\$1,551,750
Management and General	\$138,120
Fundraising	\$321,920
Total Expenses	\$2,011,790
Change in Net Assets	(\$729,151)
<b>Net Assets at Beginning of Year</b>	<b>\$2,904,355</b>
<b>Net Assets at End of Year</b>	<b>\$2,175,204</b>



WOLA BALANCE SHEET *for the year ending December 31, 2010*

### Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$675,610
Certificates of Deposit	\$994,986
Receivables	\$132,137
Prepaid Expenses	\$45,344
Other Assets	\$610,739
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,458,816</b>

### Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$65,722
Deferred Rent	\$16,990
Long-Term Liabilities	
Deferred Rent	\$200,900
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$283,612</b>

### Net Assets

Unrestricted	\$1,796,020
Temporarily Restricted	\$379,184
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$2,175,204</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$2,458,816</b>



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