



CrossCurrents

NEWSLETTER OF THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA • OCTOBER 2003

OUR VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

Celebrating CICIACS

Guatemala touches your soul. It is a country of astounding beauty and potential, and a country that has suffered astonishing loss. The challenge is to be animated by the promise, mindful but not dispirited by the sadness. For Guatemalans and their friends throughout the hemisphere dedicated to democracy and to justice, there is no other way forward.

Last December we chronicled some of the enduring impediments to progress. This is a painful and familiar story – one that needs to be retold for as long as it is true. But there is a different story that should be told as well – one that rekindles hope for coming to grips with the past, and making a different future.

The historic 1996 Peace Accords sought to re-establish the rule of law and to address the underlying causes of Guatemala's bloody 36-year internal armed conflict. Yet the country has continued down the path of violence and impunity. Since 2000, we have seen a dramatic increase in political violence and human rights violations directed against those investigating past abuses or combating impunity. Many believe these acts are carried out by clandestine structures or illegal armed groups closely linked to current and former members of the country's security forces. By perpetuating a climate of impunity, they jeopardize the rule of law and the functioning of democracy in Guatemala.

The international community has joined courageous Guatemalans in condemning these actions. UN and OAS missions in Guatemala, visits by human rights specialists from each body, and public positions of the European Parliament and the U.S. Department of State all highlight the international community's concern for the persistent attacks against civil society representatives and the failure of the Guatemalan government to consolidate the rule of law. There is growing consensus that the illegal clandestine groups need to be investigated and dismantled.

Earlier this year, with support from a number of Guatemalan human rights groups, the country's Human Rights Ombudsman called upon the government to establish an international commission to investigate the clandestine groups and illegal security apparatuses. It was a heroic initiative. In mid-March, after weeks of negotiations, the Guatemalan government and the Human Rights Ombudsman signed an agreement for the formation of the Commission for the Investigation of Illegal Bodies and Clandestine Security Apparatuses (*Comisión para la Investigación de*

— continued on page 23

IN THIS ISSUE

A New Team at WOLA 2

WOLA Leads Civil Society
Delegation to Colombia 3

Lula: One Year Later 5

A **Free** or a Fair Trade Agreement
with Central America? 7

Public Security and
Human Rights 8

What Caused Cuba to
Crack Down? 12

WOLA Launches Friends of
Latin America Program 14

WOLA Activities 16

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ON LEAVE:

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A New Team at WOLA

The year 2003 has been full of changes at the Washington Office on Latin America. Some of our best-known staff members have moved into new relationships with us, while others have taken on new responsibilities. We have brought on a new executive director, two senior associates, a program assistant and a director of operations. The new team at WOLA now includes eighteen dedicated people working on behalf of democracy, human rights and social justice in Latin America.

Bill Spencer, who served as deputy director at WOLA for eight years and became executive director in April 2001, undertook a long-planned relocation to Santa Cruz, California in August, where he continues to work with us as a senior adviser for institutional development. **Joy Olson** joined the staff as the new executive director on July 1, after having served as the director of the Latin America Working Group, a network of religious, humanitarian and foreign policy organizations to which WOLA belongs, from 1993 to 2002. While at LAWG, Joy played a key role in successful advocacy campaigns to halt the deportation of Salvadorans to their war-torn country, increase U.S. funding for Central American peace processes, declassify U.S. documents related to the wars in those countries, lift the ban on the sale of food and medicine to Cuba, and promote greater transparency in U.S. military programs in the hemisphere. Also in July, **Kimberly Stanton**, who came to WOLA as deputy director in August 2002, took on added responsibilities as director of studies. Before joining WOLA, Kimberly had served for three years as Latin America program director at the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, and for nine years as a researcher and program officer at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

With Joy and Kimberly in the director positions, WOLA is led at the staff level by women for the first time since 1974, when Diane LaVoy established the first WOLA office. We are proud of this change. WOLA has long been largely staffed by women, but now we are one of the very few foreign policy or human rights organizations in which women fill the top leadership positions.

Over the summer we completed a search for new senior associates to replace **Coletta Youngers** and **Rachel Neild**, who have been with WOLA for sixteen and thirteen years respectively. Coletta, who is in Switzerland until next summer, will return to WOLA as a senior fellow upon her return to the United States. During her time abroad she will continue to work for us half-time as director for the Drugs, Democracy and Human Rights project. Rachel will remain on staff on a part-time basis through this fall, when she will become a full-time consultant on police reform issues and also retain the title of senior fellow. She will continue to participate in and advise us on our public security reform work.

Our two new program staff members are **John Walsh**, senior associate for the Andes and drug policy, and **Gastón Chillier**, senior associate for human rights and public security. John lived in Peru in 1986-87 while working with the Jesuit International Volunteers, then joined WOLA from 1987-1993 as an intern, team assistant and special assistant for U.S. international drug policy. From there he went to the Center for Concern where he worked on World Bank and IMF issues, and in 1995 joined Drug Strategies, where he served as

— continued on page 14

WOLA Leads Civil Society Delegation to Colombia

By Kimberly Stanton

WOLA organized and led a high-level delegation to Colombia from February 14–20. Participants included Rep.

James P. McGovern (D-MA); Cindy Buhl, legislative director for Rep. McGovern; Thomas Hoyt, Jr., National Council of Churches; Charles Currie, Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities; Steve Beckman, United Auto Workers; Roberto Pagan, Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Puerto Rico; Saul Nieves, SEIU; Virginia Bouvier, United States Institute of Peace; Ellen Lutz, Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, Tufts University; Eric Olson, Amnesty International USA; and Kimberly Stanton, Jason Hagen and Tina Hodges of WOLA's staff.

For three days the delegation traveled to urban areas that lie in the midst of conflict zones: Barrancabermeja, in the province of Santander; Popayán, in Cauca; and Sincelejo, in Sucre. The final two days were spent in Bogotá. We met with union and religious leaders, human rights defenders, government and military officials, members of the judicial branch (including the Constitutional Court), regional authorities, development specialists, and representatives of international organizations, among others. The purposes of the trip were, first, to examine the impact of Colombia's internal armed conflict and U.S. and Colombian government policies, including President Álvaro Uribe's 'democratic security' policy, on civil society, and second, to identify initiatives by civil society and democratic actors in Colombia – projects, programs, proposals for alternative policies – that could benefit from support from the international community.

Colombia has been described as the oldest democracy in Latin America by U.S. government officials and members of Congress. But though the form of government is representative democracy and political leaders are elected, the country has long been characterized by widespread social, political and economic exclusion. The 1991 constitution, written by a constituent assembly after peace negotiations with the M-19 guerrilla movement, was meant to break the long history of exclusion. But throughout the 1990s democratic actors seeking to exercise their basic rights came under attack. Members of human rights

organizations, journalists, union activists, religious and social leaders, government officials and elected leaders have all been threatened, harassed and assassinated.

The delegation found that the risks to democratic actors have not abated since President Álvaro Uribe took office in August 2002. On the contrary, civil society leaders continue to be targeted by illegal armed groups, the state continues to fail in its obligation to protect the exercise of the most basic human rights, and powerful voices in the government are calling for reforms to



Delegation members met with children from the displaced community of Cristo Viene at their school, established by Justapaz, a ministry of the Mennonite Church.

the 1991 constitution designed to roll back its democratic advances.¹

The delegation met with human rights, religious and union leaders in each city we visited. One major concern was the continuing failure of the Colombian state to investigate, prosecute and sanction those responsible for threatening, attacking or killing civil society leaders. The failure is perhaps most striking in the labor sector, where 184 activists were killed in 2002. Union activists we met expressed concern for their own physical safety, even when surrounded by heavily armed bodyguards, in many cases provided by the government.

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Delegation to Colombia

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Second, there is growing fear and apprehension in light of the expanding practice of *señalamiento*, in which government officials publicly disparage legal democratic activities and implicitly or explicitly link the activities to ‘subversion’ or ‘terrorism.’ In the months before we arrived, a presidential advisor, an ambassador, military leaders and the Minister of Interior were among those who publicly denigrated human rights organizations.²

The *señalamiento* is closely linked to two other deeply troubling practices, the misuse of intelligence information and judicial harassment. The military’s intelligence files are widely believed to contain false and misleading information about civil society leaders. In the past such information has been directly linked to threats, attacks and killings of human rights and

subversive activity. The list itself was full of inaccuracies: it included groups that no longer existed, projects that never existed as organizations, and groups that did not have an office in Bucaramanga. Of the real organizations on the list, several responded by challenging the authorities to investigate them in accordance with due process. But the allegations apparently had no real basis. This happened in the aftermath of a widely publicized December raid on the headquarters of the *Asamblea Permanente por la Paz*, in which no evidence of subversive activity was found. Since the delegation returned, other well-known organizations have been targeted by judicial authorities based on informants’ ‘tips,’ including *Justicia y Paz* and the *Comité Permanente de Derechos Humanos* in Arauca.

Many of the organizations with whom the delegation met oppose particular policies of the Uribe government. Unions strongly oppose labor and pension reforms that were pushed through a

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union activists. The people we met believe the risks posed by misleading information are even greater now, since Mr. Uribe established a paid informants’ network whose participants are not subject to prior vetting. New cases of misuse of intelligence were brought to the attention of the delegation. For example, in one instance the military allegedly obtained incriminating statements about individuals’ links to guerrillas by threatening members of a community with paramilitary attack. The military later searched a car in which those identified were traveling, and allegedly planted incriminating information in their vehicle. This ‘evidence’ was subsequently provided to the attorney general’s office, and served as the basis for legal charges against the persons targeted.

More generally, judicial harassment appears to be the newest strategy to delegitimize civil society leaders. At the time of the delegation’s visit, authorities were alleging that thirteen organizations in the city of Bucaramanga were linked to

pliant congress last December. The delegation was told that the labor law reform includes a provision to extend the length of a normal workday, eliminating the need to pay overtime. One labor leader described the reform as “taking us back forty years.” According to several union activists, 43 percent of the national budget goes to debt payments, but only one percent is directed to social spending, in a country in which 67 percent of the population lives in poverty. There is strong and deep opposition to further privatization of state enterprises, such as Ecopetrol. Leaders of the *Unión Sindical Obrero* (USO), the union that represents Ecopetrol workers, described it as “our enterprise;” its defense has been a top priority for decades. Yet it was clear that not just the policies were at stake, but the very right and means to organize and oppose these, and the recognition that such opposition is a legitimate and constitutive part of democracy.

— continued on page 10

Lula: One Year Later

By Vicki Gass

Almost a year ago, on October 27, 2002, Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva was elected president of Brazil with an unprecedented 61% of the vote. He ran on a platform that called for sustainable development and the reduction of poverty and inequality. Lula’s election raised great expectations in a region where the promises of democracy and economic well-being have not been fulfilled. His administration has sought to implement government policies that address social problems while maintaining fiscal discipline. The Workers’ Party (PT) brought considerable political capital as a party with a reputation for transparency, accountability and incorruptibility.

Lula’s government has faced challenges on many fronts. Brazil is the ninth largest economy in the world and the largest in Latin America. Yet, of a population of over 175 million people, an estimated 44 million live below the poverty line and 15 million live in absolute misery. Meanwhile, one percent of the population receives the equivalent of 13.3% of the gross domestic product. Brazil suffers from a high unemployment rate, a low minimum wage, a huge informal economy that employs over half the labor force, and a history of forced and child labor.

Lula entered office with tenuous credibility in the international financial markets, a weak economy, the lack of a majority in the congress, and heightened expectations from within the Worker’s Party. Brazil is greatly burdened by a public debt equivalent to nearly 60% of GDP, which fed initial concerns that the country could default on its loans. The International Monetary Fund provided a \$30 million bailout loan, but with the restriction that Brazil guarantee a government budget surplus of 3.25% of GDP for debt payments and to maintain economic stability, placing great constraints on the resources available to respond on the social front.

Internal challenges included much-needed agrarian reform and an overhaul of the Brazilian retirement system. The pension system, which accounts for 42% of all government payroll costs, contributed to a \$20 billion fiscal deficit in 2002. Under the current system, full pay pensions are provided to most civil servants after 35 years of service. But there are inequities, such as \$750 pension payments to unmarried daughters of high-ranking military officials who have never worked, or costly payments to former high-ranking military

officers who may receive even more money after retirement than they did during active service because they are entitled to increases pegged to wages. Nonetheless, because so many working and middle class people depend on the pension system, reform is a politically sensitive issue.

Externally, the new administration faced other critics. The U.S. press portrayed Lula and his administration as left-leaning or populist, or emphasized his low level of education or his worker roots in order to cast doubt on his abilities. Prior to the elections, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) characterized Lula as “a pro-Castro radical” who had, he alleged, formed a Latin American “axis of evil” with his counterparts in Cuba and Venezuela.¹

Finally, Lula was faced with the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations, which Brazil is co-facilitating with the United States. On the campaign trail, Lula called the FTAA the “economic annexation” of Latin America to the United States, and gave all indications that he would be a formidable counterweight to the pro-investor, anti-labor rights, anti-rural development and anti-environment positions of the Bush administration.

With almost a year in office, Lula has demonstrated vision, thoughtfulness and pragmatism. He established a higher surplus target than required by the IMF (4.25%), submitted a budget proposal with \$14 billion in budget cuts and began the painful process of debating pension reform. As a result, he was able to reverse the “crisis of credibility” that haunted the beginning of his government, winning praise from such adversaries as the International Monetary Fund.

Domestically, Lula moved quickly to act on his campaign promises. In the first half of the year, he:

- ▶ created a Social Assistance Ministry and a Secretariat of Economic and Social Development;
- ▶ suspended a \$760 million purchase of a dozen new jet fighter planes for the air force, saying that the money could be better used to relieve hunger;
- ▶ initiated a \$1.6 billion Zero Hunger Campaign designed to give financial support to 1.5 million families, and to implement reforms that would foster sustainable agriculture and generate rural employment;

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Lula

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- ▶ took steps to reduce severe racial discrimination by promoting affirmative action in government jobs and contracts, and in university admissions;
- ▶ boosted Brazil's minimum wage by 20% and pledged to double the value of the minimum wage before the end of his term in 2006;
- ▶ promised to grant formal property titles to the millions of people living in squatter communities, thereby allowing them access to credit, basic utilities and other services such as mail delivery; and,
- ▶ renegotiated debt payments to help 825,000 small landowners and authorized \$1.88 billion in aid to small farmers.


Abroad, Lula has taken a proactive foreign policy stance promoting a multilateralism that contrasts sharply with the unilateralism of the Bush administration. He spoke at the Davos World Economic Forum in January 2003 and urged the developed countries to play a stronger role in combating poverty. In Latin America, he moved quickly to revitalize the Mercosur countries in order to form a stronger negotiating block vis-à-vis the United States and promote regional economic integration. On security issues, Lula played a key role in easing the internal political crisis in Venezuela during the spring of 2003. He has spoken out strongly on appropriate regional responses to the escalating armed conflict in Colombia, opposing military intervention, and most recently urged a peaceful, constitutional resolution to political violence in Bolivia. Finally, Brazil played a leadership role in organizing developing countries around a united position on agriculture at the September meeting of the World Trade Organization in Cancún.

But the accomplishments of the first year have served as much to highlight the immense challenges Brazil faces, as to overcome them. As Lula continues his fiscal balancing act, new attention is being focused on human rights violations and impunity. Asma Jahangir, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, just completed a three-week mission in Brazil to investigate reports of death squad murders. She uncovered a "gruesome picture . . . not worthy of a fit, democratic Brazil."² Two people who provided her with

information on police involvement in killings were later brutally assassinated. Recent press reports state that sixty land rights activists have been killed since the beginning of the year, the highest level since 1990.

Traditional allies such as the *Movimento Sem Terra* (the landless workers' movement) and environmental groups have strongly criticized the Lula administration. The MST opposed the appointment of an agribusiness leader, Roberto Rodrigues, as minister of agriculture and is unhappy that the government has not moved more quickly to implement agrarian reform. The environmental movement strongly opposes Lula's controversial proposal to put a pipeline through the Amazon and the recent decision to allow the sale of genetically-modified soy products.

Nor have Lula's economic policies appeased some on the right. Millionaire industrialist and vice president, José Alencar, has been publicly critical of the high interest rates, currently at 26%, that limit the business sector's access to capital. And it appears that pressure from the military influenced Lula to reverse his earlier decision on the purchase of jet fighters.

President Lula is walking the proverbial tight-rope. On one side are the orthodox economic policies and traditional elite, and on the other, the social and progressive movements who helped elect him and still have high expectations. If there is not more progress soon on the social agenda, and if the human rights situation does not improve, his current popularity rating of more than 75% could decline. Yet, it is important to remember that Lula inherited most of the problems he now faces as president. Francisco Meneses, an agriculture and hunger specialist at the research center IBASE, described the situation as follows: "The Workers' Party won the elections but the social and economic forces affecting Brazil changed little. The government appears to have little leeway to implement profound changes for now. Our best hope is that once the economic situation is stabilized, Lula will be able to implement more radical reforms."³ 

Endnotes

¹ Letter from Congressman Henry Hyde to President Bush, October 24, 2002.

² See Harold Olmos, "Police Abuse Witness Killed in Brazil," the Associated Press, October 10, 2003.

³ Quoted in article by Roger Burbach, "Brazil's Lula: Confounding Friends and Foes," undated. Burbach is director of the Center for the Study of the Americas (CENSA) in Berkeley, California.

A *Free* or a Fair Trade Agreement with Central America?

By Vicki Gass

In January 2003, the United States began negotiating a free-trade agreement with the Central American governments. Negotiations take place every six weeks with an official deadline for finishing this December. Under the rules for fast track approval, Congress will only have the option of voting for or against the trade agreement in its entirety next year. Government officials are touting the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) as the latest development strategy that will lift the isthmus out of poverty. After years of electoral politics and damaging structural adjustment reforms that have not brought promised prosperity, Central Americans are understandably wary of new assertions from the north.

Since the trade negotiations began, WOLA has been actively working to promote an alternative vision of trade among Congress and members of the Bush administration. While there are many issues of concern in the trade agreements – lack of participation and transparency, rules on intellectual property rights, investor-to-state lawsuits, among others – WOLA has focused primarily on the issues of labor rights and agriculture in CAFTA.

Labor clauses in recently signed trade agreements have only required countries to uphold existing labor laws. Experience has clearly demonstrated that such clauses are inadequate. As we noted in our June letter to the United States Trade Representative (USTR), even the 2002 U.S. Department of State country reports on human rights practices for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua were unambiguous in demonstrating the dismal record of these countries in guaranteeing core labor standards. In discussions with members of Congress and the administration, we have argued that any trade agreement must ensure that all workers can freely exercise their rights as stated in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, and the right to work free from discrimination. Further, dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms must be transparent and directly sanction violators.

Of equal concern is that further trade liberalization under CAFTA will only deepen the crisis in Central America's rural sector, where agriculture



Darci Frigo of Terra de Direitos provides a Brazilian perspective at WOLA's September conference on trade and rural development.

and rural livelihoods remain key to Central American survival and well-being. In Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, agriculture is the largest source of employment, engaging 52.5, 43.9 and 43.2 percent of the economically active population respectively. Sixty percent of Central America's poor live in rural areas and forty percent of the workforce is engaged in agriculture.

Proponents of CAFTA claim that rural producers will benefit from access to new markets in the United States and from increased trade with Central American neighbors. But with Central American farmers already on an uneven playing field, it will be even harder for them to compete with highly subsidized U.S. agricultural products, which are expected to flood the region under CAFTA. Following the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the majority of Mexican *campesinos* has experienced lower income and a deterioration in their land and food security. The real value of wages dropped nearly eighteen percent between 1993 and 1999.¹ In January, the Catholic Bishops of Mexico stated that "the results of this agreement have been beneficial

— continued on page 13

Public Security and Human Rights

International Experiences and Lessons for Mexico

By Rachel Neild

In late 2002, a consortium of Mexican businessmen headed by Carlos Slim, the wealthiest man in Latin America, paid \$4.3 million in consultant's fees to former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani for his recommendations on improving crime prevention and public security in Mexico City. In August 2003, city authorities released a document containing 143 recommendations made by Giuliani Associates, basically proposing the adoption of key aspects of the "New York model" of policing.

Crime and violence have been high on the public agenda for most of the last decade in Mexico City, and, as a result, there is considerable public support for "tough on crime" measures. In this context, the contract with Mr. Giuliani has fueled a hot political debate. The media coverage and visibility of the plan have increased Mexico City

Indeed, a highly polarized debate had emerged, primarily in the media, as the city government announced new initiatives and rights activists responded with concerns about potential negative effects. For some, this dynamic raised the specter that human rights would come to be seen by the broader public as an obstacle to security, and would contribute to an increasingly hostile relationship between human rights activists and police reformers in the government, undermining possibilities for dialogue and reducing the opportunity to tackle police abuse as a central element of the reform.

In order to place human rights concerns and the human rights community squarely in the debate, and offer alternative models of crime prevention and police reform based on improving police conduct as well as effectiveness, WOLA, the Mexico City Human Rights Commission (CDHDF)

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mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador's approval ratings to nearly ninety percent, boosting his presidential ambitions. A February 2003 poll in the newspaper *La Reforma* found that, while five out of ten Mexico City residents thought the security situation was unchanged, and two in ten thought it had worsened, fifty-eight percent thought that the city government was working hard to combat crime.

Although broad public opinion favors the effort to come to grips with Mexico's worsening security situation, many concerns have been raised about the use of public order and quality-of-life policing approaches – often termed "zero tolerance" – in a context such as Mexico City. While city government has responded that Giuliani's recommendations will be adapted to local realities, little effort has been made to reach out to, consult or build consensus with the human rights community or other concerned parties with regard to the recommendations and the means by which they will be implemented.

and the *Centro Miguel Agustín Juárez Pro Derechos Humanos* (PRODH) co-hosted a major conference on September 26, 2003, in Mexico City. "Public Security and Human Rights: International Experiences and Lessons for Mexico" was attended by well over three-hundred people, including representatives of the Mexico City police department, the Secretariat for Public Security, the Mexico City legislature and the attorney general's office, the federal legislature (senate and chamber of deputies), state human rights ombudsman's offices (San Luis Potosí and Mexico City), Mexico City neighborhood committees, the Mexico City legislative assembly, the human rights unit of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (federal), officials from various Mexico City delegations (neighborhoods), the Chiapas attorney general's office, the Mexico City prisons, the Chiapas governor's office, the federal attorney general's office, the Mexico City comptroller's office, and the Education Ministry, as well as many NGOs and media.

The first panel of the conference discussed different aspects of security from national security to public security and the new concept of “citizen security.” The second offered an analysis of New York’s reforms, of community policing in San Diego and crime prevention in Boston, and a comparative analysis of community policing initiatives in Latin America. The final panel focused on dynamics in Mexico, at which public security secretary Marcelo Ebrard spoke.

The conference was characterized by a remarkably lively and open debate with many contrasting viewpoints from the broad range of constituencies in attendance. It also provided information and an informed debate to a broader audience than has usually been present for the largely academic events on public security reforms held over the last year or so in Mexico. The wide range and high level of participation were indicative of the hunger for more and better information on public security issues. The conference report, to be published in early 2004, will make the viewpoints presented more widely available, and an abridged version will be available in English on WOLA’s web site.

WOLA, the CDHDF and PRODH took advantage of the presence of international experts to conduct two side meetings. The first was with Ebrard and authorities from the *Secretaría de Seguridad Pública*, which we hope laid a foundation for further dialogue as the reform process moves forward. The second was



Gustavo Palmieri, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), Argentina, Rachel Neild, WOLA, Alvaro Camacho, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia, and Ernesto López Portillo, Instituto Seguridad y Democracia (INSUDE), México.

a workshop with national and local Mexican human rights organizations to discuss strategies, risks and opportunities for those working on policing and citizen security reforms from a human rights vantage point. Starting with this set of activities, WOLA hopes to continue to support Mexican colleagues as they develop their work in this challenging area. 🌐

The U.S House Again Votes to Ease Cuba Embargo

On September 9, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to end funding for enforcement of the ban on U.S. citizens’ travel to Cuba by a vote of 227–188. They also voted to reinstate legal people-to-people educational travel to Cuba, 246–173, and to permit U.S. citizens to send money to Cuba without restrictions, 222–196. This was the fourth consecutive year that the House voted to end restrictions on travel to Cuba, and the second year it voted to allow unrestricted remittances to the island. The Senate is likely to approve an identical amendment to end all travel restrictions by mid-November.

The votes again showed strong bipartisan support for changing U.S. policy toward Cuba. Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) commented, “The House tonight recognized that for forty years, U.S.-Cuba policy has violated the right of every American to travel freely.” Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AR) commented, “The U.S. policy of the last forty-plus years has failed the citizens of this country and failed to achieve the stated objectives.”

The votes occurred in spite of the Cuban government’s unprecedented crackdown last spring on peaceful opposition leaders and dissidents (see accompanying article). Rather than derail support for easing the embargo, it appears that the crackdown reinforced the belief of many members of Congress that current U.S. policy is doing nothing to improve the situation in Cuba, and that travel, trade and engagement are likely to have more of an impact than isolation.

The White House responded by announcing that it will seek to tighten enforcement of the travel ban, without specifying how. Ironically, many of those who skirt the embargo restrictions by traveling to Cuba are Cuban-Americans, who also take millions of dollars in remittances to Cuba. So a genuine effort to strictly enforce the embargo would have the most impact on Cuban-Americans, the very group whose votes President Bush is seeking by trying to maintain an out-of-date and ineffective policy.

Delegation to Colombia

continued from page 4

In spite of the extremely difficult atmosphere in which democratic actors find themselves in Colombia, the delegation saw many examples of civil society-led efforts designed to increase the prospects for peace through integrated, participatory development programs. We visited three of these efforts, of which the best known is the Program on Development and Peace in the Middle Magdalena river valley (PDPMM), covering 29 municipalities in four provinces. In Cauca, we met with more than twenty social



Children pedal past a Barrancabermeja soccer field where paramilitaries massacred six and disappeared twenty-seven people in May 1998, during their push for control of the city.

organizations that participate in the *Plan Alterno*, a regional initiative originally developed by several governors as an alternative to aerial fumigation. In Sincelejo we discussed the mayors' development plan for the *Montes de María* region.

These programs have many elements in common. They encourage an integrated approach to sustainable development, with attention to human rights and culture as well as economic alternatives. The programs foster community participation and are multi-sectoral, involving universities, non-governmental organizations, churches, the private sector, and public institutions. They emphasize meeting basic needs — food, water, education, health, housing, and

infrastructure — and strengthen organizations and institutions.

The programs have obstacles in common as well. Developed in conflict zones, they are subject to threats, attacks and killings. In Cauca, both guerrillas and paramilitaries have dramatically increased their presence in the last two years. The PDPMM has had staff members killed by guerrillas and by paramilitaries. Perhaps with the exception of the PDPMM, the programs face funding shortfalls. Major financial and political support comes from the international community rather than the Colombian government. In the case of the *Plan Alterno*, the governors' opposition to fumigation has cost them support in Bogotá. In February, several of the governors who have led the opposition to fumigation were under investigation by the Inspector General for their dissent.

In spite of these obstacles, the approach is spreading. Over the last year Redprodepaz, the Network of Programs of Development and Peace, was created with UN Development Program support. The network links together 16 integrated development programs with a presence in 28 provinces, in more than 300 municipalities, including the programs the delegation visited. One risk is that civil society ends up playing the role the state should be playing: providing education and basic health services, financing development — even facilitating pragmatic dialogue with armed actors. The Uribe government has included *Redprodepaz* in its national development plan, but is not providing national funds for social investment in the regions the delegation visited — not even in Sincelejo, which lay within one of the special rehabilitation and consolidation zones the government established as soon as it came into office. When questioned about this, Vice President Francisco Santos said that the government had no money for social investment and was prohibited from deficit spending. He hoped that USAID and Europe would finance the “peace laboratories.”

When Plan Colombia was initially proposed in 2000, the Clinton administration promised “carefully balanced and integrated programs that respond to Colombia's wide-ranging problems.”³ The reality has been very different: an overwhelming investment in the military, while alternative development aid has reached only a fraction of the farmers affected by fumigation. The conflict has escalated; sectors of the military retain their ties to paramilitary organiza-

tions; there have been no credible prosecutions of military officials accused of human rights crimes; and human rights violations attributed to the military, especially arbitrary detentions, are increasing. Yet Colombian civil society continues to demonstrate resilience and creativity. People put their lives on the line everyday as they respond to the tragedy around them. Since their return, members of the delegation have redoubled their efforts to draw attention to the crisis of human rights and democracy in Colombia, and to support the grassroots efforts that are creating real possibilities for peace and reconciliation. 🇵🇪

Endnotes

- ¹ Bills are pending to grant the military judicial police powers; to restrict the use of tutela, or injunctions, in cases of violation of economic and social rights; to remove constitutional restrictions on the issuing of decree laws; to prohibit the Inspector General from carrying out disciplinary investigations of military officers; and to establish penalties other than prison for those convicted of grave human rights violations, among others.
- ² On September 8, President Uribe went on record before a military audience, attacking unnamed human rights organizations as “politickers at the service of terrorism.” In a stunningly strident speech, Uribe lashed out at critics of his security and social policies, and defended government tactics, including arbitrary detentions and raids of civil society organizations, that have prompted strong expressions of concern from the international community. As of this writing, he has not retracted his remarks.
- ³ White House Proposal for U.S. Assistance to Plan Colombia, March 21, 2000.

New Publications

Contact us to place your order!

Drug War Monitor, Mexico’s Military in the War on Drugs, by Jorge Luis Sierra Guzmán, WOLA consultant, April 2003, 20 pp., \$3.00. Describes how the militarization of law enforcement functions and institutions could undermine Mexico’s transition to democracy. *Also available in Spanish on our web site (text only).*

Drug War Monitor, The push for zero coca: Democratic transition and counternarcotics policy in Peru, by Isaías Rojas, WOLA consultant, February 2003, 24 pp., \$3.00. Documents how the hardening of U.S. demands that Peru achieve “zero coca” within the next five years are feeding a climate of social conflict that could lead to a resurgence of political violence in coca-growing regions. *Also available in Spanish on our web site (text only).*

Colombia Monitor, Protecting the Pipeline: The U.S. Military Mission Expands, by Jason Hagen, May 2003, 20 pp., \$3.00. Analyzes the role of oil in Colombia’s internal armed conflict, and the dangers of the United States’ growing military involvement there.

Paint by Numbers: Trends in U.S. military programs with Latin America & challenges to oversight, by Joy Olson, Adam Isacson and Lisa Haugaard, August 2003, 8 pp., \$2.00. Published jointly by WOLA, the Latin America Working Group and the Center for International Policy, the report describes trends in U.S. military training based on information from congressionally-mandated reports that the Bush administration has sought to eliminate. *Link to the PDF version from WOLA’s home page.*

Hidden Powers: Illegal Armed Groups in Post-Conflict Guatemala and the Forces Behind Them, by Susan C.

Peacock and Adriana Beltrán, September 2003, 12 pp., \$2.00. Examines the nature and impact of illegal armed groups in Guatemala today, the forces behind them, and how these “clandestine groups,” acting at the behest of an interconnected set of powerful Guatemalans known as “hidden powers,” are an unresolved legacy of Guatemala’s 36-year internal armed conflict.

WOLA’s new publications are also available in PDF versions on our web site.

From the Drugs, Democracy and Human Rights project, and available only on our web site:

Special Update on Guatemala: Guatemala Decertified, by Ana Carolina Alpírez A., WOLA consultant and journalist in Guatemala, April 2003.

Special Update on Venezuela: Venezuela Torn by Polarization, by Antonio J. González Plessman, Director of Research, PROVEA, Venezuela, March 2003.

Special Update on Bolivia: Coca Conflict Turns Violent, by Kathryn Ledebur, WOLA consultant and director of the Andean Information Network in Bolivia, February 2003.

Special Update on Ecuador: U.S.-Ecuadorian Relations as a New President Takes Office, by Sandra Edwards, WOLA consultant in Ecuador, December 2002.

Our web site has been revamped!

Please visit www.wola.org for up-to-date news on Latin America and on WOLA’s programs, and for access to many of our publications.

What Caused Cuba to Crack Down?

By Rachel Farley

On March 18, the Cuban government began a wave of arrests of dissidents, independent journalists and human rights activists. Seventy-five people were arrested and charged with working for or with the U.S. government with the intention of subverting the Cuban regime. All of the arrestees were tried and given sentences ranging from six to twenty-eight years. In a separate action, on April 11, Cuba executed three people accused of hijacking a ferry in an attempt to go to the United States.

WOLA and many other organizations condemned these actions. On April 8, in a rare vote that unified members of Congress on both sides of the U.S.-Cuba policy debate, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 414–0 to condemn the crackdown, and called for the immediate release of all prisoners. There has also been widespread

but Cason communicated almost solely with Cubans who are critical of the Cuban government, demonstrating that U.S. policy is less concerned about democratic openings in Cuba than appeasing hard-line Cuban-Americans. Rather than helping to open political space for dissidents, Cason's approach has done exactly the opposite by contributing to a crackdown that has left dozens in prison.

Perceptions on the island of U.S. government intentions toward Cuba also played a big role in the crackdown. The Cuban government viewed Cason's actions as very threatening within the broader political context in which the Bush administration has sought regime change in Iraq and taken a pre-emptive, unilateral approach to foreign policy. The press reported comments by some U.S. diplomatic personnel suggesting that Cuba could be a target of similar action after the

Rather than helping to open political space for dissidents, Cason's approach has done exactly the opposite by contributing to a crackdown that has left dozens in prison.

international criticism of Cuba's summary trial and execution of the three hijackers.

While Cuba's actions and the various condemnations of them were widely reported in the press, there was little serious analysis of the causes of the crackdown. What provoked the arrests and sentences?

Cuba charges that those sentenced were receiving money from the U.S. government, and that the arrests were a reaction to the activities of James Cason, chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba. Mr. Cason held meetings and attended workshops with the accused, provided them material assistance, and gave them easy access to Interests Section computers and Internet. At one meeting with dissidents, he criticized the Cuban government in a press conference.

The actions of Mr. Cason were provocative. While the U.S. says its policy in Cuba is to promote democracy by reaching out to civil society, the approach taken by Mr. Cason has proven to be ineffective and counterproductive. Diplomats should be free to meet with dissidents,

Iraq war. Viewed from the United States, it may seem preposterous to think that the administration would consider military action against Cuba. But in Cuba the perception seems to be quite different: the government invoked national security considerations to defend its repression of dissent. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) returned from a spring trip to Cuba asking the Bush administration to calm fears by stating clearly that it has no intention of undertaking military action against the island.

Whatever the reasons for the crackdown, Cuba's choice of action was indefensible. But Cuba's unacceptable actions are not a reason to step back from efforts to end the embargo. Rather, the crackdown demonstrates that the long-standing U.S. policy of isolation has failed to bring about positive changes in Cuba, most notably in the area of human rights. While blame for the repression ultimately lies with the Cuban government, the crackdown also shows that the Bush administration's approach to diplomacy in Cuba isn't working. If the United States wishes to have any influence in Cuba, it needs to engage with the island. 🇺🇸

Trade Agreement with Central America

continued from page 7

for some regions and some growers in the country, but the majority of the farmers, small peasant and indigenous farmers, has experienced a severe decline in their incomes and quality of life . . . It is important to note that the group which did reap significant benefits [from NAFTA] numbers in the thousands, while the group that did not is made up of approximately 3 million farmers.”²

CAFTA proponents have also argued that much of the rural population displaced by trade liberaliza-

Rural Development: The Costs and Benefits of Trade Liberalization on Rural Livelihoods.” Expert panelists from Central America, Brazil, and the United States explored why the rural sector matters, the impact of free trade on the rural sector, and alternative visions for trade and development. The keynote speaker was Bishop Álvaro Ramazzini from San Marcos, Guatemala, who has worked tirelessly on behalf of landless campesinos, migrant workers, coffee pickers and tenant farmers, and has been an outspoken advocate of land reform. Other speakers included Leslie Schweitzer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Adolfo

Rather than signing a trade agreement that maximizes investor rights and market access, the U.S. needs to negotiate trade agreements that allow governments to address development issues, protect the rural livelihoods of small and medium producers and farm workers, guarantee workers’ rights and, above all, reduce poverty.

tion will be able to find employment in other sectors, such as manufacturing and services. But again, the lessons of NAFTA demonstrate that employment in non-agricultural sectors will not necessarily provide alternatives for low-skilled, out-of-work farmers. A March 3, 2003 *New York Times* article stated, “Few new jobs have been created that could absorb [Mexican] farmers. Mexicans fleeing the countryside are flocking to Houston and swelling Mexico’s cities, already congested with the poor and unemployed.”³

Rather than signing a trade agreement that maximizes investor rights and market access, the U.S. needs to negotiate trade agreements that allow governments to address development issues, protect the rural livelihoods of small and medium producers and farm workers, guarantee workers’ rights and, above all, reduce poverty. In the framework of our Rights and Development program, WOLA is seeking to prevent any erosion of labor rights protections in the final CAFTA agreement, and to encourage the adoption of provisions to protect small producers, including exempting subsistence products (corn, beans and rice) from trade liberalization and allowing targeted subsidies for small producers.

We are pursuing these goals by providing information and analysis to members of the U.S. Congress, and by playing a leading role in coalition and public education work around the trade issue. On September 5 of this year, we co-sponsored a day-long conference on Capitol Hill entitled “Rethinking

Acevedo, Nicaraguan Institute for Sustainable Development; Denise O’Brien, Women, Food and Agriculture Network; Professor Mark Edelman, Hunter College; Mark Schneider, the International Crisis Group; José Angel Tolentino, Central American Trade and Integration Initiative; and Darci Frigo, Terra de Direitos in Brazil.

Some members of Congress have already voiced concern about the lack of labor rights protections in Central America and have vowed to vote down CAFTA if such rights are not guaranteed in the trade agreement. But until now, there has been little discussion of the impact trade liberalization could have on the rural sector. The September conference was a first step in increasing awareness and understanding of the issues involved. We will build on this work to advocate for a “fair trade agreement or no trade agreement,” as the time approaches for Congress to vote. 🌱

Endnotes

- ¹ Timothy A. Wise, “NAFTA’s Untold Stories: Mexico’s Response to North American Integration,” Americas Program, Interhemispheric Resource Center (IRC), June 10, 2003.
- ² Episcopal Commission for Social Action, “For the Dignity of the Land, For the Dignity of Mexico: A Message from the Bishops of the Episcopal Commission for Social Action Regarding the Situation of the Mexican Countryside,” Mexican Bishops Conference, January 2003.
- ³ Tina Rosenberg, “Why Mexico’s Small Corn Farmers Go Hungry,” *The New York Times*, March 3, 2003.

WOLA Launches Friends of Latin America Program

WOLA hosted a lively dinner on March 19th at Café Atlántico in Washington to launch our new Friends of Latin America Program (FOLA). The FOLA initiative is reaching out to a select circle of individuals who share WOLA's vision for the hemisphere and understand the importance of our work. By lending their stature, financial support, insight and experience to WOLA's work, members of FOLA will help ensure that we have the reach and resources needed to defend and extend democracy, human rights and social justice in Latin America through the challenging years ahead.

Café Atlántico, a popular restaurant with a strong Latin flair, was the perfect location for people to come together to discuss their views on important issues in Latin America. Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) provided an inspired keynote address, sharing his findings from his February trip to Colombia as part of a delegation organized by WOLA (see accompanying article). The dinner was

a great success, the first of many special events we plan to host for community and professional leaders who want to make the promise of human rights a reality in the western hemisphere. 🇺🇸



Rep. Jim McGovern and WOLA board member Alex Wilde celebrate the launch of the FOLA program at Café Atlántico in Washington.

New Team at WOLA

continued from page 2

director of research. Gastón is an Argentine human rights lawyer who came to WOLA after two years as director of the Latin America program at the International Human Rights Law Group. In Argentina, Gastón worked for CELS (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales), one of Argentina's premier human rights organizations, where he was involved in both litigation and advocacy. Gastón's presence will also allow WOLA to develop new work on the impact of U.S. foreign policy, including counter-terrorism and trade policy, on human rights and democracy in the region, and to strengthen our human rights work overall. Gastón is the first Latin American to hold a senior staff position at WOLA, and the second Latin American we have on staff. Adriana Beltrán, our program officer for Guatemala, is Colombian.

Last spring we also promoted **Vicki Gass** to senior associate for economic issues and Brazil.

Vicki has worked with WOLA in many capacities over several years, most recently coordinating a major project on reconstruction in Central America in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. She is the author of the WOLA book *Democratizing Development*, published in 2002. **Geoff Thale**, senior associate for El Salvador, Cuba and Nicaragua, has taken on additional responsibilities for coordinating advocacy at the institutional level. In that capacity he will contribute to strengthening and systematizing WOLA's advocacy strategies vis-à-vis the U.S. government and Congress.

Our new director of operations, **Tanya Aguilar**, began in June. Tanya has several years' experience in international education and a deep interest in human resources. Her duties will include providing support for our web page and being part of the team of staff members responsible for media and publications outreach.

In May we said good-bye to **Tina Hodges**, who did an outstanding job as program assistant for the Andean region, Mexico and drug policy

for two years. Tina has gone on to graduate school in public policy at the University of Maryland. After a highly competitive search, **Katie Malouf** joined WOLA as the new program assistant for the Andes, Mexico and Public Security. A graduate of UCLA, Katie is also a former WOLA intern. We regret that in June we also had to say good-bye to **Jason Hagen**, WOLA's associate for Colombia in 2001–02. WOLA's Colombia portfolio has been integrated into our work on the Andes, drug policy and human rights.

In 2004, WOLA will celebrate its 30th anniversary. While much has been achieved in the last three decades, governments throughout the region still struggle to make representative

institutions truly responsive to citizen concerns and to consolidate the rule of law as they confront deepening poverty and inequality, widespread citizen insecurity, and the stubborn defense of privilege by the region's economic, political, and military elites. U.S. foreign policy in the context of the global war against terrorism, with its increased emphasis on intelligence-sharing and the growing willingness to sacrifice civil liberties in the name of fighting terrorism, risks contributing to the return of forms of engagement and involvement that were widely discredited during the cold war. We believe WOLA's mission continues to be as essential today as it was thirty years ago, and all of us on WOLA's staff are ready for the challenge. 🇺🇸

Stunning Findings from Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) submitted its final report to President Alejandro Toledo on August 28, taking an historic step forward for Peru and for the advancement of human rights throughout the hemisphere. The final report, presented formally by Commission president Salomón Lerner Febres at Peru's national palace in Lima, concludes that more than 69,000 people were victims of political violence in Peru between 1980 and 2000, a figure that far exceeds the previously accepted total of 30,000 deaths. The Commission found a "notorious" relationship between poverty and social exclusion and the probability of being a victim of violence. Nearly eighty percent of the victims were from the rural sector, and three out of four were native speakers of Quechua or other indigenous languages. More than forty percent of the victims were concentrated in Ayacucho, where the conflict began.

The report attributes more than half of the killings (54%) to Shining Path guerrillas, 1.5% to the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru, 30% to the Peruvian Armed Forces, and the remainder to rural self-defense groups and peasants. Mr. Lerner described the doctrine and strategy of the Shining Path as "death accompanied by cruelty." At the same time, the Commission found that Peru's security forces committed systematic human rights

violations that may provide the basis for charges of crimes against humanity.

In his moving speech, Lerner spoke of the responsibility of the political class for its indifference and ineptitude, which allowed abuses by the military and which permitted so many deaths to go unnoticed. "Statistics do not convey the horror and tragedy" of the violence suffered by innocent Peruvian citizens, said Mr. Lerner in his comments. The deaths were spread out over two democratically-elected governments and the authoritarian regime of Alberto Fujimori.

The Commission's report concludes with a call for an integrated program of reparations directed at the peasants, the indigenous and the poor who have traditionally been excluded, with the aim of overcoming the climate of indifference and the discriminatory habits that made possible the tragedy the report documents. For the Commission, reparations must include justice: "no path towards reconciliation will be passable unless it is accompanied by the effective exercise of justice . . . It is not possible to construct an ethically healthy and politically viable country on the foundation of impunity."

WOLA is calling upon President Toledo to designate a follow-up commission and ensure the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

The following is a list of activities undertaken by WOLA between November 2002-September 2003.

Washington Policy Work

- ▶ WOLA circulated a letter to the Dept. of State signed by 22 NGOs encouraging respect for human rights in counter-drug operations in **Bolivia**. WOLA and the Andean Information Network wrote a letter to the Dept. of State expressing concern over injuries and deaths resulting from U.S.-funded Bolivian security force repression of coca grower protests. WOLA also worked with congressional offices to educate them on this issue.
- ▶ WOLA joined other members of the Colombia Steering Committee in meetings with staff of newly elected members of Congress to discuss U.S. policy towards **Colombia**.
- ▶ WOLA produced informational memos, worked with congressional staff, and mobilized support for an amendment to cut U.S. military aid to **Colombia** in the 2003 supplemental spending bill. The amendment lost narrowly, 209 to 216.
- ▶ In April, staff from WOLA, the Center for International Policy, LAWG, and the U.S. Office on **Colombia** met with Michael Fruhling, director of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Bogota, to discuss implementation of the Office's recommendations to improve the human rights situation in Colombia.
- ▶ In May WOLA again joined with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to oppose the Dept. of State's decision to certify **Colombia's** compliance with human rights conditions contained in U.S. legislation. In a press statement, WOLA emphasized that the Dept. of State was only able to identify a handful of cases where paramilitaries had been detained by Colombian authorities, and not all of the crimes involved human rights violations.
- ▶ In July WOLA participated in a press conference on Capitol Hill with Amnesty International, the Latin America Working Group, Center for International Policy, and the U.S. Office on Colombia, and Reps. James McGovern (D-MA) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), to issue a 'Report Card' on the third year anniversary of Plan **Colombia**. The report card, which gave U.S. policy failing grades vis-à-vis its stated goals, received coverage from the *Miami Herald*, *BBC Mundo* and *El Tiempo*, among others.
- ▶ Also in July, WOLA and other members of the Colombia Steering Committee mobilized support for a proposed amendment to the FY2004 foreign operations appropriations bill, which would have cut \$75 million in military aid to **Colombia**. The amendment was defeated 195 to 226 under heavy pressure from the Republican leadership, but generated an important debate on the floor and reflected the growing controversy over the policy.
- ▶ In January and February, WOLA met with the staff of new members of Congress to discuss U.S. policy toward **Cuba**.
- ▶ WOLA supported February efforts by the **Cuba** Section of the Latin America Studies Association to ensure that Cuban scholars invited to participate in the Association's 2003 conference would be granted U.S. visas to attend the event.
- ▶ In March, WOLA circulated a memo analyzing proposed new restrictions on travel to **Cuba**. The memo went to colleges and universities, and others affected by the new restrictions.
- ▶ In early April, WOLA wrote to Ambassador Dagoberto Rodríguez, Chief of the **Cuban** Interests Section in Washington, condemning the arrest and imprisonment of 75 dissidents, human rights activists and independent journalists in Cuba in March. WOLA also wrote to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell criticizing the provocative and counterproductive actions of James Cason, Chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, and the Bush administration's approach to relations with Cuba more broadly.
- ▶ WOLA and the Latin America Working Group organized a September briefing for the House of Representatives, co-sponsored by five members of Congress from the **Cuba** Working Group, on the Office of Foreign Assets Controls and problems with the licensing process for legal travel to Cuba.
- ▶ In September, House **Cuba** Working Group members circulated a letter to all members of the House, urging them to vote to end restrictions on travel to Cuba. WOLA and the Latin America Working Group drafted the letter and collected 116 signatures from Cuban-American groups, business and trade associations, and religious, human rights and international affairs organizations.
- ▶ WOLA drafted a NGO sign-on letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell urging the U.S. to remain neutral in the run-up to the Salvadoran presidential elections, following comments by the out-going U.S. ambassador to **El Salvador** that disparaged the FMLN.

- ▷ WOLA staff traveled to New York early in the year to meet with UN personnel and discuss the establishment of an international commission to investigate clandestine groups in **Guatemala**. WOLA issued several joint statements in support of the commission, with Human Rights Watch, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and Amnesty International.
- ▷ WOLA staff met in Washington with the new **Guatemalan** Ambassador to the U.S., Antonio Arenales Forno, and with Oswaldo Enríquez of the Guatemalan attorney general's office, to urge the establishment of an international commission to investigate clandestine groups in Guatemala.
- ▷ Laurie Freeman met with numerous congressional staff to discuss U.S. policy towards **Mexico**, including drug control policy and Leahy Law implementation. She produced the memos: "Corruption within the Special Anti-Drug Police," "The Fiscalía to Investigate the Dirty War," "Human Rights Abuses by the Military during Counter-Drug Operations," and "Continued Police Abuse and the Conflict in Chiapas."
- ▷ In April, WOLA drafted and circulated an NGO sign-on letter opposing military jurisdiction in the case of Valentina Rosendo Cantú, an indigenous woman who was raped by soldiers in **Mexico** in 2002.
- ▷ In July, WOLA produced "Crying Out for Justice," a background memo on the unsolved murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, **Mexico**.
- ▷ In July, WOLA helped draft and circulate an NGO sign-on letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell regarding the case of Cynthia Kiecker, a U.S. citizen arrested and tortured into confessing to the murder of a young woman in Chihuahua, **Mexico**.
- ▷ In September, WOLA co-sponsored several briefings on the situation of violence against women in Ciudad Juárez, **Mexico** for members of Congress.
- ▷ Laurie Freeman and Vicki Gass met with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to discuss WOLA's work in **Mexico and Brazil**.
- ▷ WOLA and other organizations sent a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell encouraging the Dept. of State to comply with its stated intent to deliver declassified documents to Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The letter received widespread press coverage in **Peru**, and the documents were released shortly thereafter.
- ▷ In April, WOLA circulated a memo to Congress urging U.S. support for **Peru's** extradition request to Japan for former president Alberto Fujimori, and encouraged other NGOs to join the international campaign launched for this purpose.
- ▷ In April, WOLA and a coalition of NGOs drafted a sign-on letter to President Bush and the U.S. Trade Representative advocating participation and transparency in the **Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) negotiations**. Over sixty organizations signed the letter. Also in April, WOLA staff, with colleagues from InterAction, Oxfam America and Partners of the Americas, met with USAID officials to discuss the lack of civil society participation in the negotiations for a **CAFTA**.
- ▷ In May, Geoff Thale and Vicki Gass, with colleagues from the AFL-CIO, Human Rights Watch, and the Carnegie Institute for International Peace, participated in a briefing for the Congressional International Labor Rights Caucus and House International Relations Committee on the **CAFTA** negotiating text.
- ▷ In July and September, WOLA circulated two NGO sign-on statements proposing **principles for fair trade with Central America**.
- ▷ Vicki Gass and NGO colleagues met with Jose Fourquet, the U.S. Executive Director for the **Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)**, to discuss the IADB's work in and funding to **Guatemala** in the context of increasing human rights violations.
- ▷ WOLA, along with members of the Latin American Working Group and others, drafted a letter to the managing director of the **International Monetary Fund**, expressing concern over the undue influence exerted by the Fund in the debate over the content and scope of **Nicaragua's** budget for FY2003.
- ▷ In January Rachel Neild drafted a statement expressing concern over issues of transparency, accountability and oversight of the proposed **International Law Enforcement Academy in Costa Rica**, which seeks to provide international police training with funding from the United States. The statement was distributed to members of the U.S. Congress, the Costa Rican National Assembly and the press.
- ▷ In the spring WOLA staff met with Roger Pardo-Maurer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Andre Hollis, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for

Counternarcotics, to discuss the **Pentagon's growing involvement in efforts to combat crimes other than drug trafficking**. WOLA staff authored an op-ed cautioning against this trend, which was published in the *Miami Herald*, *El Periódico* of Guatemala, and *El Heraldo de Mexico*.

- ▷ WOLA staff met in April with Rafael Martínez, the candidate nominated by the Bush administration to replace Robert Goldman on the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**. WOLA subsequently played a leading role in encouraging Latin American governments to vote only for those candidates that met the OAS criterion of "recognized competence in the field of human rights." WOLA organized a sign-on letter that was sent to all the OAS missions and the ministers of foreign affairs of all the Latin American countries.

Presenting Latin American Voices

- ▷ In February WOLA co-sponsored a thematic hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on violations of human rights linked to the land struggle in the **Brazilian** state of Paraíba. Vicki Gass and Kimberly Stanton assisted with preparations for the hearing, and Vicki accompanied the Brazilian human rights defenders to a meeting with the director of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus to raise awareness of the situation on Capitol Hill.
- ▷ In September, WOLA co-sponsored a presentation by Darci Frigo, director of *Terra de Direitos*, a **Brazilian** land rights organization. WOLA also facilitated and accompanied Mr. Frigo to meetings with members of Congress.
- ▷ WOLA organized a brown-bag lunch and meetings on Capitol Hill for **Colombian** lawyer Alberto León Gómez Zuluaga, an expert on labor rights and economic and social rights in the rural sector. Mr. Gómez also participated in WOLA's rural development conference on Sept. 5.
- ▷ In early September WOLA organized meetings with congressional and administration policy-makers and hosted a brown-bag lunch for Juliet Rincón, director of Redprodepaz, a network of participatory development projects that seek to lay the groundwork for peace and reconciliation in **Colombia**.
- ▷ WOLA co-sponsored a presentation by members of *Iniciativa CID*, a coalition of **Central American** civil society representatives who have monitored the CAFTA process and in July called for a moratorium on the negotiations. WOLA also helped to set up

meetings between CID and members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

- ▷ In September, WOLA arranged meetings for **Central Americans** representing small farmer and agricultural organizations from Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala with officials of the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, U.S. Dept. of State, and with offices of members of Congress.
- ▷ In February, WOLA hosted a brownbag presentation by Guadalupe de Espinosa of the Human Rights Institute of the *Universidad Centroamericana*, who gave an overview of the human rights and political climate in **El Salvador**.
- ▷ In February, WOLA staff arranged meetings with members of the U.S. Congress for representatives of the medical workers unions in **El Salvador**. WOLA also organized a briefing for the Congressional International Workers Rights Caucus on the long-standing health care workers' strike in El Salvador and the debate over privatization of health care. The Workers Rights Caucus circulated a congressional letter on this issue, with support from WOLA.
- ▷ In July, WOLA hosted a presentation and press conference with members of the Political Commission of the FMLN of **El Salvador**, who were in Washington for meetings in preparation for the Salvadoran presidential race.
- ▷ WOLA assisted members of the **Guatemalan human rights community** during visits to Washington and New York by arranging meetings with the U.S. Dept. of State, the Organization of American States, congressional offices and UN offices, the Inter-American Development bank and a number of NGOs. Visitors included Human Rights Ombudsman Sergio Morales; Gustavo Meoño, director of the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation; Frank LaRue, director of the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights; Helen Mack, director of the Myrna Mack Foundation; and Orlando Blanco, director of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala*.
- ▷ In April WOLA and the Moriah Fund accompanied representatives from the *Plataforma Agraria* of **Guatemala** to meetings with administration and congressional offices, the Inter-American Development Bank and a number of non-governmental groups. The *Plataforma*, a coalition of rural organizations, visited Washington to discuss obstacles to development in the agricultural sector and the country's coffee crisis.

- ▷ WOLA coordinated the advocacy agenda for **Mexican** human rights groups attending the February session of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. WOLA staff arranged meetings with Dept. of State officials and congressional staff, and sponsored a public forum.
- ▷ In September, WOLA co-hosted a brownbag lunch for Fabienne Venet, director of Sin Fronteras, an organization that promotes the rights of migrants and refugees in **Mexico**.
- ▷ WOLA hosted a late September visit by Mariclaire Acosta, who served **Mexican** President Fox as undersecretary for human rights and democracy until August.
- ▷ In March, WOLA arranged meetings for **Peru's** *Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* with policy-makers, diplomats, and NGOs in Washington, and sponsored a public forum for the Peruvian visitors.
- ▷ WOLA arranged meetings with congressional staff and NGO representatives for **Bolivian** coca grower leader Leonilda Zurita.

WOLA in Latin America

- ▷ WOLA staff traveled to **Guatemala**, where they met with representatives of the U.S. Embassy, Guatemalan government officials, the UN mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), the UN Development Programme, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Guatemalan Human Rights Ombudsman and attorney general, and Guatemalan NGOs, to discuss the human rights situation and the formation of an international commission to investigate clandestine groups.
- ▷ WOLA signed a letter to President Portillo and helped place a paid advertisement in the **Guatemalan** press calling for the establishment of the international commission to investigate clandestine groups.
- ▷ WOLA staff led a delegation with Representative James McGovern (D-MA) and union and religious leaders to **Colombia** to evaluate the effects of the armed conflict on civil society and to assess alternatives to current U.S. policy. They visited the cities of Barrancabermeja, Popayan, Sincelejo, and Bogotá, and spoke with union and religious leaders, human rights and development workers, and government and U.S. embassy officials.
- ▷ Consultant Sandra Edwards represented WOLA at the *Encuentro Regional Salud, Derechos Humanos y Fumigaciones*, held in the province of Nariño, **Colombia**, in late May.
- ▷ Kimberly Stanton met in April with Anders Kompass, director of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in **Mexico** City, to discuss ways that international human rights groups could support the work of his office.
- ▷ In Mexico in May, WOLA and the PRODH Human Rights Center organized a press conference for project consultant Jorge Luis Sierra to present the findings of *The Militarization of the Drug War in Mexico*. The press conference was attended by a number of radio and print journalists, as well as officials from several embassies. Laurie Freeman stayed on to meet with a range of U.S. and Mexican officials involved in implementing counternarcotics programs there, as well as human rights organizations, journalists, and academics.
- ▷ In August Laurie Freeman participated in a two-day meeting with **Mexican** and U.S. human rights NGOs to discuss common concerns and develop joint strategies and activities. She also participated in a day-long meeting with Anders Kompass of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, where experts assembled by the UN presented the preliminary findings of their diagnostic of Mexico's human rights situation and recommended reforms.
- ▷ Coletta Youngers and consultant Isaías Rojas traveled to **Peru** for the **Drugs, Democracy, and Human Rights Project** where they presented the new Peru brief to the U.S. ambassador to Peru, embassy staff, Peru's congressional drug policy commission, the "drug czar's office," the Minister of Foreign Relations, and others. The *Instituto de Defensa Legal* hosted a public forum attended by NGO representatives, journalists, and others.
- ▷ In July, WOLA drafted and circulated a sign-on letter to **Peruvian** President Alejandro Toledo. Signed by 12 other organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the letter encouraged the establishment of a follow-up working group to implement the recommendations of Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- ▷ Coletta Youngers, Eileen Rosin, and Tina Hodges traveled to **Bolivia** for meetings to gather information on the impact of U.S. drug policy on human rights.
- ▷ Coletta Youngers and Eileen Rosin visited Puerto Rico to work with **Drugs, Democracy and Human Rights Project** consultant Jorge Rodríguez and to

meet with other experts and government officials involved in drug policy and its impacts.

- ▶ John Gitlitz and Paul Chevigny, authors of WOLA's *Citizen Security Monitor*, "Crisis and Reform: the Police in the **Dominican Republic**," launched the Spanish version of the report at a series of events and press conferences in the DR, hosted by Dominican NGOs. Events included a full-day seminar and a half-day public forum, with participants from the police, the judicial system, NGOs, and community organizations. The launch of the report received considerable press coverage in the Dominican media, including interviews on several TV and radio programs and extensive coverage in the national paper *El Caribe*.
- ▶ In June Kimberly Stanton and Adriana Beltrán traveled to **Nicaragua** to oversee the closing of WOLA's advocacy training office in Managua, and to discuss prospects for transferring the training program to local NGOs there and in **Honduras** with the donor community.

Conferences and Events

- ▶ On March 15 Kimberly Stanton and Vicki Gass attended the day-long founding meeting of the Brazil Strategy Network, hosted by the AFL-CIO, to discuss how to support innovative social policies being implemented by the **Brazilian** government and civil society. Vicki attended the second meeting of the network in New York City in late September.
- ▶ On January 24, WOLA and The George Washington University co-sponsored a seminar, "The Pluralism of New Social Movements in **Bolivia**," featuring Dr. Rob Albro, with Kevin Healy providing commentary.
- ▶ On March 31, WOLA co-sponsored with Human Rights Watch the launching of Robin Kirk's new book, *More Terrible Than Death: Massacres, Drugs, and America's War in **Colombia***, at Olsson's book store in Washington.
- ▶ Rep. McGovern and other participants in the WOLA-led delegation to **Colombia** presented the findings of the trip at a public event in April, co-sponsored with the U.S. Institute of Peace. The event was attended by NGOs, congressional staff, academics, embassy and government officials, and was covered by the Colombian news outlets *El Tiempo* and RCN. It was also web-cast.
- ▶ Kimberly Stanton organized a panel entitled "Approaches to Strengthening Human Rights in **Colombia**" for the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) meetings, and presented a paper entitled "Human Rights and Fumigation: Analysis and Advocacy."
- ▶ Jason Hagen gave talks on **Colombia** at American University and the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center.
- ▶ On June 8, Kimberly Stanton discussed the limitations of describing the **Colombian** conflict in terms of terrorism, as a participant on the panel "The New Face of War: Rebels, Arms Dealers, Criminals and Terrorists," at the Women in International Security Summer Symposium for Graduate Studies in International Affairs.
- ▶ WOLA and three other organizations hosted a booth on **Cuba** at the American Farm Bureau Federation's annual convention in Tampa, FL, in January, to talk to farmers about agricultural sales to Cuba and the problems with U.S. policy toward the island. Nearly 600 farmers signed a petition to President Bush calling for an end to the embargo.
- ▶ In May, WOLA and the Latin America Working Group sponsored a discussion entitled "Why did **Cuba** Crack Down?," to examine the reasons for the March arrest of 75 peaceful dissidents and the execution of three accused hijackers.
- ▶ In May, Rachel Farley spoke about WOLA's **Cuba** work to interns at Amnesty International.
- ▶ In June, WOLA co-hosted a two day "**Cuba** Consultation" with the Latin America Working Group, where activists and business people from across the nation seeking to change U.S.-Cuba policy met to talk about legislative strategies and outlook. More than 50 advocates attended.
- ▶ In July, Rachel Farley spoke at an Amnesty International event about the Varela Project and political dissent in **Cuba**.
- ▶ Kimberly Stanton attended a three-day conference in May on efforts to reform the administration of justice in **Mexico**. The San Diego event brought together a wide range of scholars and practitioners who analyzed the challenges of improving public security, including the impact of the post-Sept. 11 U.S. focus on terrorism.
- ▶ WOLA organized, along with the *Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal* and the *Centro Agustín Juárez Pro Derechos Humanos*, three days of activities, including a public conference, on the issue of public security reform in **Mexico** City. The public event, "Public Security and Human Rights:

International Experiences, Lessons for Mexico,” was attended by over 200 people.

- ▷ Coletta Youngers gave a presentation at Princeton University on February 28 on the role of the human rights community in **Peru’s** Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- ▷ WOLA and George Washington University co-sponsored a March 18 seminar in which Dr. Cynthia McClintock discussed her new book *The United States and Peru: Cooperation at a Cost*. Peruvian Ambassador to the OAS Eduardo Ferrero and Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue provided commentary.
- ▷ On June 20 WOLA hosted “Illuminating the Past, Transforming the Future: A Report from **Peru’s** Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” featuring three members of the Truth Commission, Salomón Lerner, Sofía Macher and Carlos Iván Degregori, with an introduction by Phil Chicola of the Dept. of State, and two expert commentators. The event was held at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- ▷ WOLA and George Washington University co-sponsored a seminar, “Democratic Transition and Anti-Drug Policy in **Peru**,” featuring **Drugs, Democracy, and Human Rights Project** consultant Isaías Rojas on November 15, 2002.
- ▷ On February 11, Coletta Youngers gave a keynote presentation at Wooster College on U.S. international **drug control policy**.
- ▷ WOLA sponsored two panels entitled “Dangerous Exports: The Impact of U.S. International Drug Policy on Democracy and Human rights in Latin America, Parts I and II” at the LASA conference in March in Dallas, where nine of the consultants for the **Drugs, Democracy and Human Rights Project** presented their preliminary findings. The consultants also met with WOLA project staff for two days prior to the LASA conference to continue refining their inputs to the project.
- ▷ **Drug policy** project manager Eileen Rosin attended a thematic sub-conference of the World Social Forum, held in June in Cartagena, Colombia, on the topic “Democracy, Human Rights, War and Drug Trafficking.”
- ▷ Eileen Rosin and WOLA’s consultant in Bolivia, Kathryn Ledebur, gave a day’s introductory presentation on drug trafficking and **drug policy** to 70 students at the International Institute for

Mediation and Conflict Resolution’s month-long symposium, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in early July.

- ▷ Rachel Neild gave three presentations at the LASA conference, entitled: “**US police assistance and the ‘war on drugs,’**” “**Interventions and Institution Building in Haiti,**” and “**Transparency and the Governance of Citizen Security.**”
- ▷ In September, WOLA co-sponsored and organized a conference on Capitol Hill, “**Rethinking Rural Development:** the costs and benefits of free trade for rural livelihoods,” that brought together speakers from **Central America, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil** and representatives of **U.S. small farmer** organizations.
- ▷ On June 25, Kimberly Stanton spoke on **WOLA’s history and its role in the U.S. foreign policy community** at a seminar for high school teachers sponsored by the Philadelphia World Affairs Council.
- ▷ Joy Olson participated in a conference on **U.S. foreign policy** toward Latin America and security issues organized by FLACSO and held in Santiago de Chile in late August.

WOLA in the News

- ▷ WOLA published an opinion piece in the Miami Herald on November 14, 2002, entitled, “**Bolivians** pay dearly for U.S. war on drugs.” Tina Hodges was quoted on U.S. policy towards Bolivia in the Bolivian newspaper *La Razón*. Coletta Youngers was quoted in *The Guardian*.
- ▷ Jason Hagen was quoted on political developments in **Colombia** in *El Tiempo* and *El Colombiano*, and wrote opinion pieces for the *CQ Researcher* and the Inter-American Dialogue’s *Latin America Advisor*. He appeared on *BBC Mundo*, *Radionet*, RCN television and radio, and the public radio programs *As It Happens*, *Which Way L.A.?*, and *Between the Lines*. Jason also wrote an op-ed for the *Baltimore Sun* on June 8, entitled “America’s Other War: Colombia.”
- ▷ Kimberly Stanton was interviewed on human rights issues in **Colombia** by RCN, *El Tiempo* and *La FM* in Colombia, and by public radio stations KBAI New York and KPFB California, and the BBC, among others. On July 22 her letter to the editor on the failure of U.S. policy in Colombia was published in the *Washington Post*, the same day the House of Representatives voted on the McGovern-Skelton amendment that would have cut military aid to Colombia.

- ▷ Geoff Thale was quoted in *The New York Times* about the crackdown on dissidents in **Cuba** and the deteriorating diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba. He discussed the same issues on the television programs *Evening Exchange* with Kojo Nnamdi and on *Foro InterAmericano* on WorldNet Television.
- ▷ Rachel Farley was interviewed twice by the *Agence France Press* about the Varela Project in **Cuba** and U.S.-Cuban relations. In June she was interviewed by an Iowa Farm Bureau radio program broadcast to agricultural communities across the state about U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba and U.S. policy toward Cuba. In May, she appeared on *CNN Español* to speak about the March arrests in Cuba.
- ▷ Adriana Beltrán published a letter to the editor of the *Washington Times*, entitled “Delayed Justice by **Guatemalan** Government,” on the Myrna Mack murder case brought before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.
- ▷ In February and again in September, WOLA provided information about the certification process, Guatemala’s anti-drug efforts, and U.S. drug policy in **Guatemala** to journalists from the *Economist*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, *NPR*, and the *Houston Chronicle*.
- ▷ Adriana Beltrán spoke on the *Kojo Nnamdi Show* on WAMU Washington concerning drug trafficking in **Guatemala** and possible U.S. sanctions.
- ▷ WOLA provided background material and information on the proposal to form an international commission to investigate clandestine groups in **Guatemala** to a number of press sources, including *InterPress News Service*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Times* and *National Public Radio*.
- ▷ Laurie Freeman was quoted in stories about the investigation into the death of **Mexican** human rights defender Digna Ochoa that appeared in the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Arizona Republic*, the *New York Daily News*, and *La Reforma*. She was also cited in the *New York Times*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, and the *Arizona Republic* about setbacks in Mexico’s human rights policies.
- ▷ WOLA’s Drug War Monitor, *The push for zero coca: Democratic transition and counternarcotics policy in Peru*, received widespread news coverage in **Peru**, including lengthy interviews with Coletta Youngers and Isaías Rojas in *La República* and *Síntesis*, and stories in *El Correo*, *El Comercio*, *Expreso*. They were also interviewed on *Radio Programas* and on a widely-viewed evening television show.
- ▷ WOLA joined Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and groups in Peru and Japan in a press conference to launch a global campaign to extradite former president of **Peru** Alberto Fujimori. The press conference was covered by *El Comercio*, *El Correo*, *CNN Español*, Associated Press, Reuters, and EFE, among others.
- ▷ WOLA did extensive press work around the release of the report of the **Peruvian** Truth and Reconciliation Commission in late August, including 3 press releases, an editorial board mailing, and calls to key journalists, that informed articles in *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*. In addition, Kimberly Stanton was interviewed by *El Comercio*, *La República*, and other news outlets in Peru.
- ▷ Coletta Youngers co-authored an article published in NACLA regarding the political crisis in **Venezuela**, and discussed events in that country on WorldNet Television, National Public Radio, KPFK public radio and other outlets.
- ▷ Vicki Gass was interviewed and quoted by both the *Washington Times* and *InterPress News Service* for several articles on topics related to **economic development** in Latin America, including corruption at the Inter-American Development Bank, the role of remittances in Latin America’s economy, and the lack of participation and transparency in the Central American Free Trade Agreement negotiation process.
- ▷ WOLA widely publicized the release of *Paint by Numbers: Trends in U.S. military programs with Latin America & challenges to oversight*, leading to articles in *Latin America Press* and *La Jornada* of Mexico, among others.
- ▷ Kimberly Stanton appeared on “**Latin America Update**,” an occasional segment of Kojo Nnamdi’s *Evening Exchange*, in June to discuss events in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Cuba.

Celebrating CICIACS

continued from the previous page

Cuerpos Ilegales y Aparatos Clandestinos de Seguridad – CICIACS). The agreement calls for a Commission to be comprised of three members, appointed one each by the Guatemalan government, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States. It is to investigate the illegal armed groups that operate in the country, giving special attention to those groups responsible for the attacks and threats against human rights defenders, judges, witnesses, and other civil society representatives. The CICIACS is to determine the ties between these groups, state agents, and organized crime and/or private security forces, with an eye toward their neutralization and subsequent criminal prosecution.

The Commission – through its investigations and recommendations – has the potential to transform the human rights dynamic in Guatemala, and strengthen the judicial system and other state institutions charged with protecting those rights. For this promise to become a reality, the Guatemalan government must guarantee the Commission access to key information and ensure the physical safety of Com-

mission members, staff, and their families.

Citizens must be permitted to share information with the Commission in a confidential manner and be provided protection once they have done so. Ultimately, while the Commission may produce a roadmap, the Guatemalan government will have to demonstrate the political will to successfully dismantle the clandestine groups, prosecute those involved, and establish conditions that prevent their reemergence.

The international community played a vital role in pressing the Guatemalan government to face up to its human rights challenges. In the months ahead, those efforts will have to be redoubled to ensure that the Commission is created, that it functions effectively, and that its recommendations are implemented.

WOLA salutes the Guatemalan human rights community for their resolute campaign for the creation of the Commission. At the same time, we commit ourselves to remain active partners in the hard work ahead to ensure that the Commission is convened, and that it meets its promise. Success is not assured, and our hope is tempered by knowledge of the past. But our determination to seize this historic opportunity must not waiver. 🇬🇹

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WOLA Staff

Joy Olson

Executive Director

Kimberly Stanton

Deputy Director and Director of Studies

Gastón Chillier

Senior Associate, Human Rights
and Public Security

Vicki Gass

Senior Associate for Economic Issues
and Brazil

Rachel Neild

Senior Associate for Public Security Program

Geoff Thale

Senior Associate for El Salvador,
Cuba and Nicaragua

John Walsh

Senior Associate for the Andes
and Drug Policy

Laurie Freeman

Associate for Mexico and Drug Policy

Coletta Youngers

Director, Drug Policy Project

Eileen Rosin

Manager, Drug Policy Project

Adriana Beltrán

Program Officer for Guatemala and
Media Coordinator

Rachel Farley

Program Officer for Cuba

Gabi Kruks-Wisner

Program Assistant for Central America,
Cuba and Economic Issues

Katie Malouf

Program Assistant for Mexico, the Andes,
and Public Security

Nadia Malley

Finance Manager

Lori Piccolo

Associate for Financial Development

Elsa Falkenburger

Development Coordinator

Tanya Aguilar

Director of Operations

**CrossCurrents**

Vol. 5 No. 1 & 2 • November 2003

ISSN 1059-6402

Edited by Kimberly Stanton

Washington Office on Latin America

1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20009

Tel: 202.797.2171

Fax: 202.797.2172

Email: wola@wola.org

Web: www.wola.org

**Washington Office on Latin America**

1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20009

