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Issue Paper COLOMBIA STATE PROTECTION (JANUARY 2003-MARCH 2004) May 2004

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Source: International Crisis Group (ICG). 8 March 2004. "Hostages for Prisoners: A Way to Peace in Colombia?" <http://www.crisisweb.org/library/documents/latin_america/colombia_humanitarian_exch_080304.pdf> [Accessed 31 Mar. 2004]

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of state protection in Colombia from January 2003 to March 2004, with a particular focus on changes in the national security situation, functionality of state institutions and the possibility of an internal flight alternative. It updates information

provided in Responses to Information Requests COL41715.E of 18 July 2003 and COL41770.E of 22 July 2003. An earlier version of this paper was presented orally at the Immigration and Refugee Board, Refugee Protection Division's Quality Issue Session on Colombia, held in Montreal on 23 March 2004.

2. NATIONAL SECURITY SITUATION

2.1 Current Status of Government Security Initiatives

Since becoming president in August 2002 (ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 1), Alvaro Uribe Velez has implemented a range of measures under the terms of the Defence and Democratic Security Policy (*Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática*), which are meant to consolidate state territorial control, protect the country's population, combat narcotics production and trafficking, and promote efficiency and transparency in state activities (JIR Dec. 2003, 16).

Security-related initiatives implemented to date include the following:

- the increase in the number of armed forces personnel from 55,000 to 345,000 (ibid.);
- the recruitment and deployment of more than 8,000 peasant soldiers throughout the country, with plans to have another 7,000 in place by 2006 (ibid.);
- the establishment of three "high mountain battalions" to control strategic corridors used by insurgents for movement between the highlands and lowlands (ibid., 17);
- the provision of incentives that encourage combatants to lay down their arms (ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 4);
- the deployment of security forces along the country's highways to safeguard inter-city road traffic (ibid.; JIR Dec. 2003, 17; *Los Angeles Times* 21 Jan. 2004; Terra 23 Feb. 2004);
- the improvement of intelligence gathering capabilities through the establishment of a high-level body responsible for coordinating the activities of state intelligence agencies (JIR Dec. 2003, 17);
- the creation of a civilian informant network (ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 5; JIR Dec. 2003, 17);
- the provision of incentives to encourage those with knowledge of the whereabouts of insurgent leaders to come forward (*Houston Chronicle* 17 Feb. 2004);
- the intensification of drug eradication efforts (ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 10; *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2003* Mar. 2004; Yahoo! News 3 Mar. 2004);
- and the establishment of permanent police posts in areas where such presence was previously lacking (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1d; ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 8; UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 9).

2.2 Impact of Security Initiatives on the Activities of Armed Groups

The government claims to have made major gains against the armed groups in 2003 (Colombia 2004a, 5-6; Terra 3 Feb. 2004; UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 3). According to official statistics, the accuracy of which has been disputed by human rights organizations (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4; *El Tiempo* 16 Sept. 2003), more than 16,000 suspected

guerrilla and paramilitary members either surrendered or were killed or captured in 2003 (*The Economist* 8 Jan. 2004), approximately 50 per cent fewer people were forcibly displaced (Terra 3 Feb. 2004; CODHES 18-20 Feb. 2004), and there were 84 per cent fewer attacks on towns (Terra 3 Feb. 2004). Additionally, confrontations between the state security forces and guerrilla groups intensified in 2003, with hostilities occurring predominantly in Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Santander, Norte de Santander, Guaviare, Caquetá and southern Bolívar Departments (UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 9).

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) were the object of a number of military offensives in northwestern Colombia and in the vicinity of Bogotá and Medellín in the second half of 2003 (*The Economist* 8 Jan. 2004). Security forces also launched an offensive in the southwestern Department of Caquetá in early 2004, bringing a number of remote villages under state control (*Colombia Journal* 1 Mar. 2004). As well, security forces killed or captured at least 13 mid-level FARC commanders between March 2003 and March 2004 (*Semana* 14 Feb. 2004; *Miami Herald* 10 Mar. 2004; *New York Times* 12 Mar. 2004; AP 18 Mar. 2004).

However, despite achieving some tactical successes against the FARC, according to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, state security forces have been unable to obtain any victories of a strategic or long-term nature (JIR Dec. 2003, 20), nor have they captured any senior leaders (ibid.; ICG 13 Nov. 2003, 8). The FARC has reportedly responded to the anti-insurgency campaign by withdrawing its forces into inaccessible terrain (ibid. 8 Mar. 2004, 4; UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 9; JIR Dec. 2003, 21), forming smaller units and employing guerrilla tactics (ibid., 20-21). Examples of the FARC's continuing capacity to carry out offensive operations include an attack on an army camp in Huila on 24 February 2004 in which 12 soldiers died and another 15 were injured (BBC 26 Feb. 2004; ICG 8 Mar. 2004, 4), along with a simultaneous assault on an apartment building in the City of Neiva in which three businesspeople and a maid that was working at the complex were abducted (ibid.; BBC 26 Feb. 2004; FBIS Report 1 Mar. 2004). Further information on this incident could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

The National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) has also been a target of military operations by the state security forces (UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 9; *The Guardian* 23 Feb. 2004), prompting the group to pull back its forces to "more traditional and inaccessible areas" as well as to extend its alliance with the FARC in several regions of the country (UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 9). Operations carried out by the ELN in the past year include the high profile abduction of a group of foreign tourists in the Department of Magdalena in September 2003 (ibid., 19; *Colombia Week* 5 Jan. 2004). One of the hostages escaped on the day of the kidnapping, two were released on 24 November 2003 and the rest were released on 22 December 2003 (ibid.).

Following the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in late 2002, paramilitary groups entered into peace negotiations with the government that would ideally culminate in the eventual demobilization of all paramilitary fighters (ibid. 23 Feb. 2004; UNHCHR 17 Feb. 2004, 10). While members of two paramilitary groups, namely the Medellín-based Cacique Nutibara Bloc (Bloque Cacique Nutibara, BCN) and the Cauca-based Peasant Self Defense Forces of Ortega (Autodefensas Campesinas de Ortega), laid down their arms in 2003 (*Semana* 28 Feb. 2004a; Reuters 5 Feb. 2004; Alto Comision de la Paz 2004), the peace process is facing a number of serious difficulties (Reuters 25 Mar. 2004; ibid. 3 Mar. 2004; *Colombia Week* 23 Feb. 2004).

For example, on 17 March 2004 the United States ambassador to Colombia was quoted as saying that the BCN demobilization lacked transparency and that it was "unclear what had become of many of the former fighters" (Reuters 17 Mar. 2004). Earlier, in February 2004, the government's chief peace negotiator, Luis Carlos Restrepo, issued a report stating that the paramilitary groups had failed to comply with their ceasefire, committing 16 massacres, 362 homicides and 180 abductions in 2003 (*Colombia Week* 23 Feb. 2004). Restrepo subsequently declared that negotiations were at risk of collapse unless paramilitary fighters began gathering in concentration zones where they could be kept under state surveillance (Reuters 3 Mar. 2004).

2.3 Impact of the Security Initiatives on the Law and Order Situation

The government claims that its security initiatives have resulted in a decrease in criminal activity in 2003, illustrated by a 20 per cent drop in the homicide rate and a 26 per cent drop in the kidnapping rate (Terra 3 Feb. 2004). While attributing the decrease in the number of abductions to the improved performance of specialized anti-kidnapping units along with increased public cooperation, *Jane's Intelligence Review* pointed out that the government's improvements in rescue times have been for kidnappings by common criminals, and that guerrillas are continuing to carry out abductions at a more or less constant rate (Dec. 2003, 17).

Other positive developments include the deployment of security forces along the country's highways, resulting in fewer guerrilla roadblocks and improved traveller safety (Terra 23 Feb. 2004; *Los Angeles Times* 21 Jan. 2004). However, state security forces continue to close a 105-kilometre stretch of highway between Bogotá and Medellín every night, and on 17 February 2004, guerrillas carried out their first attack on the highway in over a year, killing two truck drivers who refused to stop at their roadblock (Terra 23 Feb. 2003; CNN 18 Feb. 2004).

The government has also established a permanent police presence in all but 18 of the 157 municipalities that lacked police at the end of 2002 (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1d). However, this initiative has been criticized by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca), which claimed in mid-December 2003 that the deployment of police in conflict-affected municipalities had resulted in increased vulnerability for local people (CIJP and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004). As well, the International Crisis Group (ICG) noted that in some regions, such as the Department of Cauca, the expansion of the police presence had resulted in overstretched forces, with the same number of officers being spread over a greater number of municipalities (13 Nov. 2003, 8). According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), there continued to be "serious problems of governability and public order" in some regions where the security forces have extended their control (17 Feb. 2004, 3).

Despite these problems, the government claims that public confidence increased in 2003 as a result of its security initiatives (Terra 3 Feb. 2004). According to a public opinion poll conducted jointly by Gallup and the Bogotá current affairs magazine *Semana* in the cities of Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla in mid-December 2003, 72 per cent of those surveyed were optimistic regarding their personal prospects in 2004 and 55 per cent believed that the situation in Colombia would improve in the coming year (*Semana* 2 Jan. 2004).

2.4 Impact of Security Initiatives on the Human Rights Situation

Although the proportion of human rights abuses attributed to state security forces has decreased in the past year (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Introduction), they continue to be implicated in extrajudicial killings, illegal confinement (ibid., Introduction, Sec. 1a, b; CIJP

and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004) and disappearances (*The New Standard* 19 Jan. 2004). In the view of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), the human rights situation in Colombia remained "critical" in 2003 (17 Feb. 2004, 21) with measures taken to combat impunity achieving "few concrete results" (UNHCR 17 Feb 2004, 3). As well, the Colombian Commission of Jurists (Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, CCJ) published a study in November 2003 claiming that the use of torture is on the rise, and that all parties to the conflict are making use of it, including police and military personnel (VOA News 12 Nov. 2003).

A report released in February 2004 by a coalition of international non-governmental organizations claimed that there has been a re-appearance of the phenomenon of "social cleansing" killings in poor neighbourhoods in Cartagena, Medellín, Bogotá and Sincelejo, with 150 minors reportedly assassinated in Bogotá's Altos de Cazuca district alone in 2003 (*El Tiempo* 17 Feb. 2004). Although the report did not attribute responsibility for these killings, *Country Reports 2003* claimed that paramilitary groups continue to target and kill those identified as "undesirable," including homosexuals (25 Feb. 2004, Introduction).

Human rights groups have also criticized mass arrest operations carried out between January 2003 and February 2004 in which more than 1,900 individuals were detained on suspicion of involvement in insurgent activities and other crimes (*El Tiempo* 24 Feb. 2004). Of these, 754 have been freed (ibid.), and only 53 brought before a judge as of mid-February 2004 (ibid. 15 Feb. 2004).

3. FUNCTIONALITY OF STATE INSTITUTIONS

According to the Presidential Program to Fight Corruption (Programa Presidencial de Lucha Contra la Corrupción, PPLCC), the government has implemented a number of measures to combat corruption within the state apparatus, including the strengthening of internal control mechanisms, the development of national and regional anti-corruption strategies (Colombia 18 Feb. 2004), and the establishment of various means by which individuals can lodge corruption complaints against state agents (ibid. 18 Dec. 2003). Transparency for Colombia (Transparencia por Colombia) is the Colombian chapter of the non-governmental organization Transparency International (TI), the goal of which is to fight corruption worldwide (TI 14 Jan. 2004). Transparency International uses a combination of the results of surveys completed by businesspeople, academics, residents and former residents of countries, and risk experts to assess the level of perceived corruption (defined by TI as "the misuse of public power for private benefit, with a focus, for example, on bribe-taking by public officials in public procurement") in the public sector of countries (ibid. 2003). In its 2003 survey of corruption in state institutions, the non-governmental organization Transparency for Colombia found that 53 per cent of the 146 bodies that participated in the study were at "high" or "very high" risk of corruption (Transparencia por Colombia n.d.). While highlighting the efforts being made by several state agencies to combat corruption, the report pointed to a "notable" downward trend in the performance of certain institutions, including the Superior Council of the Judiciary (Consejo Superior de la Judicatura), the Comptroller General of the Republic (Contaduría General de la República) and the Office of the Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) (Transparencia por Colombia n.d.).

3.1 Functionality of the Police

Over the past year, police officers have received training in several areas, including forensics, crime solving techniques and corruption prevention (*International Narcotics Control*

Strategy Report 2003 Mar. 2004). Training was also provided to 840 police officers who were later assigned to rural locations that previously had little or no police presence (ibid.).

Since assuming power, the Uribe government has overseen the dismissal of numerous junior and senior police officers implicated in corrupt practices or illegal activities (MSNBC 11 Nov. 2003; VOA News 29 Nov. 2003). Among those dismissed were the country's police chief, the chief of police in Medellín (MSNBC 11 Nov. 2003) and the head of the highway police (BBC 19 Dec. 2003). In November 2003, Uribe publicly accused police officers in some regions of collusion with paramilitary groups (*El Nuevo Herald* 24 Nov. 2003). Although Uribe did not specify by name those he suspected of such links, the following day the country's new police chief responded to the accusation by dismissing the entire police force in the town of Ituango, Antioquia (ibid.).

Information on police effectiveness was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, in a public opinion poll conducted in December 2003, the police force was deemed the fourth most trusted institution in the country, behind the armed forces, the Roman Catholic Church and the media (*Semana* 2 Jan. 2004). On 17 March 2004, the *Houston Chronicle* described an extortion racket allegedly operated by paramilitary groups in Santa Marta, Magdalena, in which store owners are required to hand over between US\$10 and US\$1,000 per month, depending on the size of the business. However, the deputy commander of the National Police in Magdalena was quoted as saying that the authorities have no legal basis on which to arrest those involved in the scheme unless a victim comes forward and lodges a complaint (*Houston Chronicle* 17 Mar. 2004).

3.2 Functionality of the Legal System

According to *Country Reports 2003*, the legal system is inefficient and overburdened, facing a backlog of at least 102,000 cases as of October 2003 (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1e). In the cases of 4,077 children who suffered a violent death in 2002, only 12 of the accused were reportedly ever brought to trial (*El Tiempo* 17 Feb. 2004). In December 2003, *Jane's Intelligence Review* claimed that although the government was attempting to reform the legal system, little progress had been made "apart from identifying problem areas" (Dec. 2003, 20). The report added that the reform process had been slowed by a lack of sufficient funds (JIR Dec. 2003, 20). The lack of funding has also hampered the judiciary's ability to buy office supplies, forcing it to begin selling hard copies of its archived files to recycling companies as a means of paying for items like paper and pens (*El Tiempo* 3 Nov. 2003).

In 2003, the United States Marshals Service provided training in witness and judicial protection to an unspecified number of Colombian security officials (*International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2003* Mar. 2004). However, the intimidation of judges, prosecutors and witnesses remains a serious problem, with some judges and prosecutors assigned to small towns being forced to work from departmental capitals because of security concerns (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1e).

Accusations of wrongdoing have been levelled at the Office of the Attorney General (Fiscalía General de la Nación) (HRW 11 Mar. 2004; *Revista Cambio* 1 Mar. 2004). These include claims that Cali district office staff have been involved in corrupt practices and that members of the Cúcuta district office have ties with paramilitary groups (*Semana* 28 Feb. 2004b; *Revista Cambio* 1 Mar 2004). On 4 March 2004, the Bogotá newspaper *El Espectador* reported that the National Director of Offices of the Attorney General (director nacional de Fiscalías) had resigned

after allegations surfaced that he had dismissed two employees while head of the Bogotá regional office, one because she had turned down his sexual advances, the other because she had refused to archive (*archivar*) one of her cases. He had assumed the position of national director after his predecessor also resigned because of alleged wrongdoings (*El Espectador* 4 Mar. 2004). On 11 March 2004, Human Rights Watch (HRW) claimed that there has been a trend in the Attorney General's Office to hamper or derail cases involving "top military and paramilitary leaders," including the high profile case of General Rito Alejo del Río, accused of collaborating with paramilitary groups.

Problems have also been identified in the Office of the Attorney General's witness protection program (*El Nuevo Herald* 1 Mar. 2004; HRW 11 Mar. 2004), leading to the dismissal of the program chief (*ibid.*). Following a fact-finding mission to Colombia to gather evidence in support of a request for the extradition of paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar, American prosecutor John Beasley was quoted as saying that the witness protection program had been infiltrated by paramilitary groups, and that witnesses he had hoped to interview had left the program because they feared for their lives (*El Nuevo Herald* 1 Mar. 2004).

3.3 Functionality of the Office of the Ombudsman and Other State Institutions

The Office of the Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo), mandated to "ensure the promotion and exercise of human rights," operates a network of 34 regional offices that receive complaints of human rights violations (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). The office, which has reportedly played an important role in protecting the rights of displaced people (CIJP and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004), enjoyed a high profile under the leadership of Eduardo Cifuentes, who visited massacre sites and spoke out publicly against a wide range of human rights violations (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). However, the office has been less active since Cifuentes' departure in September 2003 (*ibid.*; CIJP and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004), and has failed to issue any public resolutions (*resoluciones defensoriales*) since that time (*ibid.*).

Other challenges facing the Office of the Ombudsman include underfunding and a lack of personnel, which have compromised its ability to monitor or prevent human rights violations (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4). As well, the Colombian Commission of Jurists and the Inter-ecclesiastical Justice and Peace Commission (Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, CIJP) claimed that the office has never received serious support from the state institutions with which it works, adding that reforms to its community ombudsman program had increased the physical area for which each community ombudsman was responsible, thereby limiting his or her ability to fulfill the program's mandate (18-20 Feb. 2004). Furthermore, *Country Reports 2003* noted that regional ombudsmen were reportedly under "constant threat" at the hands of illegal armed groups (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4).

The Office of the Prosecutor General (Procuraduría General de la Nación), empowered to receive complaints regarding wrongdoing by state agents (Colombia 1 July 2003), was reportedly involved in 633 disciplinary investigations of police officers in November 2003 (*El País* 16 Nov. 2003). These included 275 investigations that had been initiated in 2002, of which 238 were classified as ongoing (*ibid.*). However, despite such investigations, impunity among members of the state security forces remains widespread, due to a "lack of resources for investigation, lack of protection for witnesses and investigators, lack of coordination between government organs, and in some cases, obstruction of justice by individuals" (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1a).

3.4 Functionality of Non-State Institutions

Non-governmental organizations active in human rights-related work in Colombia in 2003 include

the Colombian Commission of Jurists ... and Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective, both of which focused on defending human rights through legal analysis and case work; ... the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CPDDH), which provided support and assistance to victims of human rights violations[;] ... the Association for Alternative Social Promotion (MINGA), which sought to promote respect for human rights through education, research, lobbying, and legal assistance; ... and the Free Country Foundation, which provided psychological, legal, and public relations assistance to kidnap victims and their families and lobbied the Government for better anti-kidnapping efforts (ibid., Sec. 4).

According to a report prepared jointly by the CIJP and the CCJ, the current government has placed human rights defenders at increased risk of violence (18-20 Feb. 2004). For example, despite the promulgation of a governmental directive in July 2003 prohibiting state agents from inciting hostility towards, or questioning the legitimacy of, human rights organizations, a number of senior officials, including Uribe himself, have publicly alleged the existence of links between human rights organizations and insurgent groups (CIJP and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004).

4. INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS AT RISK

4.1 Reach of the Armed Groups

Information on the reach of the FARC, ELN and paramilitary groups additional to that found in the Research Directorate's Response to Information Request COL41770.E of 22 July 2003 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In a February 2004 report, the Bogotá-based non-governmental organization Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, CODHES) noted that paramilitary groups have adopted new tactics as a result of their peace negotiations with the government (18 Feb. 2004). Rather than carrying out massacres and forcibly displacing large populations, the groups are increasingly making use of targeted assassinations and threats leading to the displacement of single individuals and family groups (CODHES 18 Feb. 2004).

4.2 Profile of Individuals and Groups at Risk of Threats or Violence by Armed Groups

A number of reports refer to groups subjected to threats or violence at the hands of the armed groups (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 2a, b, c; *Miami Herald* 28 Feb. 2004; IPS 20 Oct. 2003). These include the following:

- human rights defenders (CIJP and CCJ 18-20 Feb. 2004; IPS 20 Oct. 2003);
- medical personnel suspected of treating guerrillas (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1g);
- leftist university professors and students (ibid., Sec. 2a);
- religious leaders and activists (ibid., Sec. 2c);

- municipal and regional electoral candidates (*ibid.*, Sec. 1a; *Miami Herald* 13 Oct. 2003);
- government officials (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4; *El Tiempo* 13 Oct. 2003; CNN 3 Aug. 2003);
- trade union leaders (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 6a; IPS 20 Oct. 2003; *El Tiempo* 19 Nov. 2003);
- school teachers (IPS 20 Oct. 2003; *Chicago Tribune* 3 Aug. 2003; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 2a);
- journalists (*Miami Herald* 28 Feb. 2004; United Nations 1 Mar. 2004; *El Tiempo* 9 Feb. 2004; *Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 1a and 2a);
- off-duty military and police personnel (*ibid.*, Sec. 1a); and judicial authorities (*ibid.*, Sec. 1e).

In a document prepared in advance of Uribe's trip to Europe in early 2004, the Office of the President identified groups to whom protection is available under the terms of the Ministry of Interior's protection program (Colombia 2004b). These include trade unionists; human rights defenders and leaders of human rights organizations; leaders of the Patriotic Union (Unión Patriótica, UP) and the Communist Party of Colombia (Partido Comunista de Colombia, PCC); mayors; municipal councillors; deputies; and municipal human rights procurators (*personeros*) (*ibid.*).

Very little general information on the profile of individuals likely to be subjected to extortion or kidnapping for monetary gain could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, individuals characterized by media reports as likely to be targeted for extortion include businesspeople, particularly store owners (*Houston Chronicle* 17 Mar. 2004; *El País* 15 Mar. 2004), and professionals (*ibid.*).

4.3 Effectiveness of Protection Measures Available to Threatened Individuals

The government has claimed that there was a significant decrease in the number of killings of teachers, journalists, trade unionists, mayors and municipal councillors in 2003 (Yahoo! Noticias 23 Jan. 2004). For example, the government indicated that 49 trade union leaders were killed in 2003, compared with 121 in 2002 (*ibid.*). However, according to the National Labour College (Escuela Nacional Sindical, ENS), 80 union members were killed in 2003, 20 survived attempts on their lives, six were kidnapped, four disappeared, and 295 were threatened with death (*Country Reports 2003* 25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 6a).

According to the Office of the President, a total of 8,840 individuals benefited from the Ministry of Interior's protection program in 2003, while the program itself received the highest resource allocation in its history (Colombia 2004b). *Country Reports 2003* indicated that requests for protection "increased by 7 percent, a significant decline from the 106 percent increase registered in 2002" (25 Feb. 2004, Sec. 4).

Measures introduced by the government to protect threatened individuals have been criticized in a number of reports (*El Tiempo* 19 Nov. 2003; *ibid.* 9 Feb. 2004). For example, four trade unionists who returned to Colombia after seeking asylum abroad claimed that state-

appointed bodyguards were more focused on monitoring their union activities than providing protection (ibid. 19 Nov. 2003). On 9 February 2004, the newspaper *El Tiempo* reported that because security measures implemented by the Ministry of Interior to protect eight Arauca-based journalists included only two vehicles and four bodyguards, they were forced either to limit their movements or always travel together. According to the Office of the President, in many instances protection measures were not implemented because program beneficiaries refused to accept the program's terms (Colombia 2004b).

In December 2003, 84 Colombians were repatriated from Panama to the Municipality of Jurado, Chocó, under the auspices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (PCS 30 Jan. 2004, 4). Despite the presence of approximately 150 army and police personnel, returnees expressed concern regarding the security situation in Jurado as well the lack of basic infrastructure (ibid.).

Very little information on the effectiveness of measures to combat extortion could be found among the sources consulted. However, according to the newspaper *El País*, while the number of extortion complaints in the Department of Valle del Cauca decreased in 2003 following the arrest of 152 individuals suspected of involvement in such activity, there has been an upsurge in the number of extortion cases in the first two months of 2004 (15 Mar. 2004). The authorities believe the perpetrators, who typically portray themselves to victims as guerrilla or paramilitary members, are largely prison inmates operating in conjunction with other individuals still at large (*El País* 15 Mar. 2004).

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

Colombia Week

According to the Center for International Policy, a Washington, D.C.-based organization founded following the Vietnam War and made up of former peace activists and diplomats, *Colombia Week* is a "well-researched news summary, updated weekly in English" (17 Mar. 2004). The Website of Truman State University in Indiana lists *Colombia Week* as "independent news and analysis of current events" (30 Mar. 2004). According to its Website (<http://www.colombiaweek.org>), *Colombia Week* is posted on Mondays and is also available as a free e-mail bulletin. The content of the Website includes both original works and links to other on-line publications.

Comisión Intercongregacional de Justicia y Paz (CIJP) and Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (CCJ)

The Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (CIJP) is a national Colombian human rights organization, operated through churches, to support the work of the Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas de Trujillo (AFAVIT) (the Association of Relatives of the Victims of Trujillo, the families of more than 100 peasant farmers who were executed by security forces working with paramilitary groups, or who "disappeared" in 1989 and 1990) (AI 10 Feb. 1999). According to the Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame in the United States, the Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (CCJ) is the Colombian branch of the Andean Commission of Jurists (Comisión Andina de Juristas) (n.d.). A non-governmental organization, CCJ conducts and distributes information on human rights in Colombia, and encourages the understanding and use of appropriate legal standards and instruments (Helen Kellogg Institute n.d.).

Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODEES)

The Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES), the Colombian organization Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement, is a non-governmental organization that keeps track of the number of displaced persons in Colombia, using information it gathers through working with church groups and other non-governmental organizations (USCR 1999). According to the US Committee for Refugees's (USCR's) 1999 Country Report for Colombia, while CODHES's work is well respected by most independent observers (including USCR), the Colombian government and some other observers have expressed their concerns that the numbers presented do not indicate cases of Colombians relocating and reintegrating elsewhere within the country, and are therefore inflated (*ibid.*). According to the Center for International Policy, CODHES has been instrumental in promoting peace efforts in Colombian society (17 Mar. 2004)

Terra

According to the Website of Terra Lycos, one of the most far-reaching Internet companies in the world, Terra.com provides on-line Spanish- and Portuguese-language local and international news and services (Terra Lycos 2003b; *ibid.* 2003c). TerraLycos was formed in May 2000 through an agreement between Terra Networks, S.A. and Lycos, Inc.; the partnership was expanded to include media giant Bertelsmann, and Spain's telecommunications group Telefonica (*ibid.* 2003a). Newspapers and magazines *El País*, *Semana* and *El Tiempo* are published through TerraLycos (Terra Networks 2004).

Transparencia por Colombia

The Colombian chapter of Transparency International (TI), Transparencia por Colombia, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to fighting corruption in Colombia (TI 14 Jan. 2004). According to Yahoo!'s Directory of International Organizations, Transparency International's purpose is to examine, report and fight against corruption in business, public administration and government (2004). National chapters of TI are located in more than 85 countries worldwide (TI 2004). The Website for the 10th International Anti-Corruption Conference notes that TI's work has been instrumental in bringing about positive change in government accountability and in developing public awareness of corrupt business and government practices (*n.d.*).

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