



37th FIDH Congress, 6 to 10 April 2010 in Yerevan

**RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN AND COMMUNITIES IN THE MIDST OF GROWING
U.S. MILITARISATION AND INTERVENTION IN COLOMBIA**

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), gathered for its 37th World Congress in Yerevan, Armenia, from 6 to 10 April 2010, expresses its extreme concern over the situation of women and communities as a result of the intense militarisation of the territory, of civil life and of women's bodies, growing even more intense as a result of the presence of U.S. military bases in Colombia, which will lead to an escalation of the war in Colombia and increase tensions in the region.

CONSIDERING

That since 2002, the year in which the first Government of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez began, a so-called policy of democratic security has been applied that denies the existence of the social and armed conflict in Colombia, is qualified as a fight against terrorism, ignores the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, involves civilians in programs such as the network of informers, soldiers of my people and soldiers for a day, and therefore violates the principles established in international humanitarian law ratified by the Colombian state.

That our concern increases on finding that the Government of Colombia makes decisions that put sovereignty at risk due to direct interference through the badly named "international agreements for security cooperation", which allow the presence and establishment of U.S. troops in seven territories of Colombia by handing over the same number of Air Force, Navy and Army bases in Palanquero (Centre), Apiay (East) and Malambo (Caribbean North); the Army forts in Tres Esquinas (South), Tolemaida (Center) and the Navy bases in Cartagena (Caribbean North) and Bahía Málaga (Pacific West) where 800 soldiers and 400 contractors will be stationed enjoying complete immunity, thus constituting a surrender of sovereignty and institutionalising impunity for the violation of the laws, the constitution and Human Rights, as has already occurred with U.S. soldiers involved in crimes and drug trafficking.

That the growing militarisation of the territories, of civilian life and of women's bodies in the context of the internal armed conflict being experienced by Colombia has led to an increase in violations of Human Rights, a worsening of the armed conflict and extrajudicial executions (out of more than 1,600 denounced cases, more than 800 have taken place in the past 6 years), the prosecution of Human Rights defenders, the persecution by intelligence bodies of social leaders and organisations.

That militarisation has increased and worsened acts of violence against women, the logic of war in Colombia having shown that the lives and bodies of women are seen as a territory for control and power through the occupation of women's bodies by the different political, military and economic forces in confrontation: the body as a territory of violence.

That the Constitutional Court has amply recognised and ratified through its issuing of Writ 092 the disproportionate impact of the armed conflict on Colombian women and that the situation of female victims demonstrates the seriousness of gender violence in the country; Writ in which the High Court provides a full analysis of the different forms of gender violence and considers that these are exacerbated in the midst of armed conflict.

That many Colombian women, from the depth of their wombs and with the force of reason, of organisation and mobilisation, as well as of their love for their sons and daughters and for their country, view with concern the surrender of the territory and of sovereignty, because these then constitute battle fields to solve internal conflicts and to implement political, economic and military strategies against a continent progressing in the construction of in its own fate.

That the location of the seven military bases with U.S. presence in Colombia is part of a geostrategic political decision to allow control of the geostationary orbit: this is an orbit that rotates directly above the Earth's equator. Ten countries in the world have geostationary orbits: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Congo, Gabon, Indonesia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Zaire, and this explains the Pentagon's interest in consolidating its presence in Colombia.

That the US military bases in Colombia are a military and security strategy for controlling South America, the purposes of which are summarised as follows: 1) strategic explorations and valuations; 2) control of the population and of land property; 3) adapting the territories by building infrastructure; 4) military control over development; 5) fiscal and financial control; 6) trade agreements and normative adjustments; 7) a "humanitarian" repopulation for production.

That concern over the U.S. military presence in the Colombian bases and over the ensuing conditions of immunity has very negative effects on the enjoyment of Human Rights and of peace in Colombia, affecting regional stability.

That the increased capacity of the Colombian institutions to conduct intelligence and espionage operations, logistical support and the improvement of "security" in the current context of gigantic illegal intelligence operations, constitutes a threat for the already diminished democracy, guarantees and individual freedoms.

That the presence and use of the U.S. military bases will increase the risks of sexual violence against women, boys and girls as has been demonstrated in cases of sexual violation of underage girls, in which U.S. soldiers assigned to the Colombia Plan have been involved; and in another case of production of pornographic videos showing young women from the zone with U.S. soldiers and technicians.¹

¹ Work Table, Women and Armed Conflict. 9th Report on sociopolitical violence against women, boys and girls 2009.



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RESOLVES

To demand that the Colombian state put an end to extrajudicial executions and to impunity in these cases, and prosecute and punish those who are responsible.

To demand that the Colombian government make public in its entirety and essence the military-cooperation agreement signed between Colombia and the United States.

To establish a watch by civil society and the international community to monitor the impacts of the bases on women, the territories and the region.

To demand that the national government comply with its international obligations regarding the protection of women and girls from all types of violence and put an end to impunity for crimes related with gender violence.

To demand from the governments of Colombia and the United States broad public guarantees on the use of these bases and that these not be used to attack any country in America.

To demand **transparency** of the process and that the terms of legal immunity for U.S. soldiers and contractors not be defined with confidential clauses exempt from democratic oversight. On this principle, we can lead the demand for **limitation of immunity** that will ensure that the serious violations of Human Rights and of international humanitarian law not be excluded from the Colombian jurisdiction. This demand should emphasise non-immunity for sexual crimes, given the recurrence and seriousness of this behaviour in cases of foreign troops. We should also consider the exclusion of other crimes for which, although they do not constitute violations of Human Rights, immunity can signify the denial of the right of access to justice for the persons involved.²

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² According to Laura Gil, cases of traffic accidents due to drunken or reckless driving by U.S. soldiers and contractors are recurrent. Immunity in these cases prevents the affected persons from exercising claims and accessing justice.