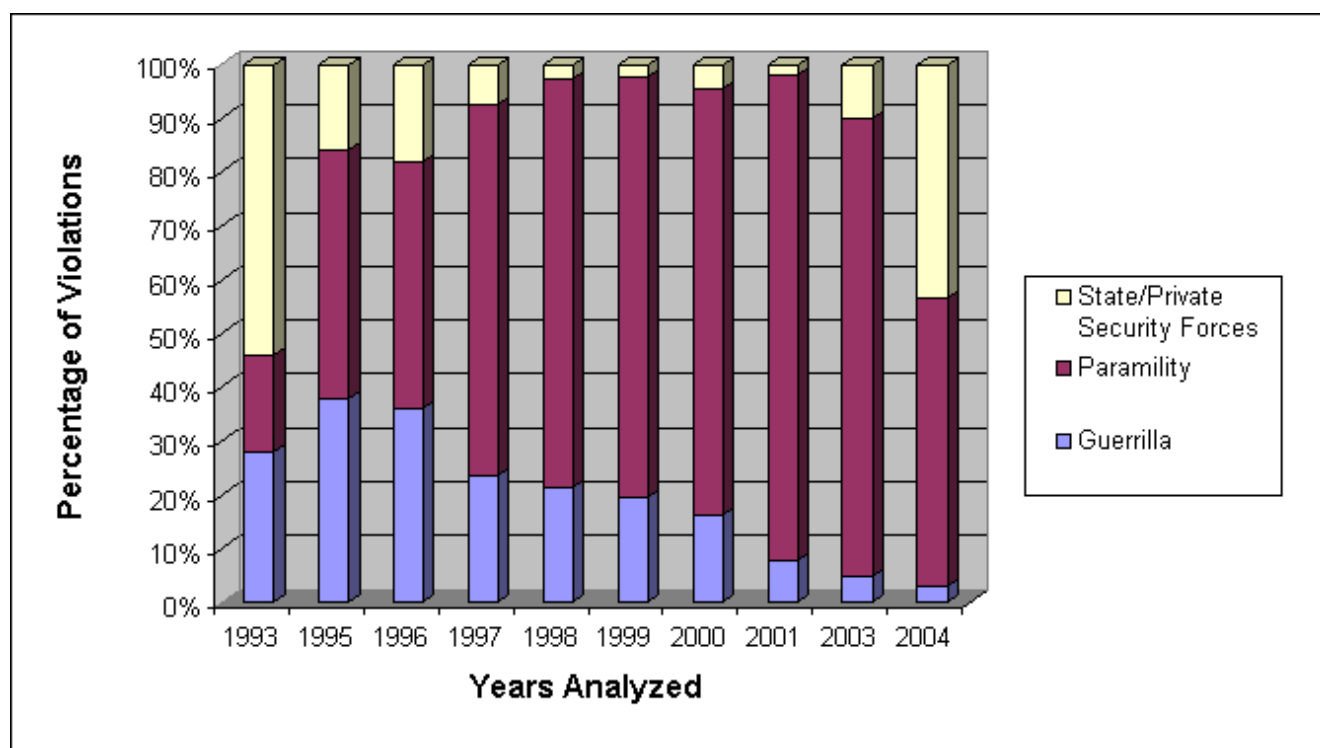


Human Rights and the Colombian Government: An analysis of state-based atrocities toward non-combatants



The Colombian civil war, similar to other Latin American conflicts over the past 50 years, has had a large portion of non-combatants mortally affected by the horrors of conflict. However, those killed or injured in Colombia are not indirect results of the discord but are in-themselves strategic military targets (Stokes, 2005; Lernoux, 1982). The reasoning behind invoking this aggression against the unarmed Colombian populace is due in part to the ever-increasing strength of the primary insurgent movement within the country. In response to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), the Colombian State – with the political, economic, and militaristic training and support of the U.S. government –

has implemented a vicious methodology in the aspiration of eliminating support for guerrillas through a "drain the sea" mentality. Via this practice, the government has ironically become, as the coming pages will demonstrate, the principle violator of human rights within Colombia. The following paper examines how the Colombian government has covertly capitalized on the façade of paramilitarism in the purpose of maintaining domestic and imperial fiscal-political interests through the methodical implementation of state-based intimidation and violence against a civilian population.

The four-decade-old civil war within Colombia has been a conflict between two principal groups; the people and the state.[1] Over such a period the Colombian government has used its authority to concede several elite class-based laws and/or decrees in the hopes of strengthening its domestic political and economic allies against the emergence of organized rural and urban proletarian antagonists. These political edicts were not mere legislative matters of congressional concern whose importance rarely left the walls of the *Capitolio Nacional*[2] in Bogotá. On the contrary, these lawmaking processes have had a much deeper tangible existence, experienced throughout much of Colombia's social environment; an unfortunate disposition which has had a devastating outcome on hundreds of thousands of Colombians. Since 1968, the state began to systematically formulate, support, and pass legislation which enabled the legal construction, formation, and continuance of paramilitary forces or more conservatively, "self-defense units" (Leech, 2002:20; Murillo and Avirama, 2004:101).[3] In doing so, the Colombian government established laws that legitimated state attacks against the guerrillas (and their supporters) through informal means; however, as increasing opposition to the paramilitary forces evolved the government had to legitimize their alternative combatants. Hence, in 1993, Decree 2535 and Decree 356[4] legitimated the ability of armed "private security" forces to protect economic interests of large landowners and MNCs (Richani, 2002:50, 52, 104- 105).[5]

The paramilitary creation was stated to be a *defensive* mechanism to protect the economic and political wellbeing of the country's wealthiest landowners; the authentic result of the paramilitary, however, has been of a more converse fashion. They have actually been an integrated reactionary model of transgression (for those that could afford it) whose purpose is to eliminate oppositional movements in the country through non-democratic means. As opposed to addressing or rectifying the true reasons as to why oppositional movements have been created (socio-political and economic dislocation), the state – alongside the economic, political and militaristic support of the U.S. administration(s) – has sought to organize counterinsurgencies to decimate those who scream for change, thus removing the political audibility of the resistance (Ampuero and Brittain, 2005). As a result, the state has institutionalized the validity of the paramilitary, making them a mechanism to protect the economic interests of a select minority, while simultaneously supporting their own political stability.

By reading the preceding one may agree that the state provided an avenue for paramilitaries to be created but may question whether the Colombian government has essentially preserved a direct role in continuing the contra forces. The answer to this can be recognized through investigating who the paramilitary forces are. One way this could be done is through examining the combatants themselves. Are these counterinsurgents merely Colombians who seek a wage in an economically restrictive society (Howe, 2004), are some simply sadistic mongers seeking to dominate much of rural Colombia (Dudley, 2004; Betancourt, 2002), or are these anti-guerrilla far-right combatants seeking to eliminate leftist oppositionists (Kirk, 2003)? Doing this however, while of great importance, can alleviate the institutional reality of how these groups were formed and why they were created. The proceeding does not fray from this reality and seeks to describe the paramilitary's composition and their direct

relation to the state.

In most respects the paramilitary units are largely made up of active Colombian soldiers and/or retired state combatants while maintaining close alignment through strong technical and physical contacts with the Colombian army. In this respect one can think of the paramilitary as an extended hand or division of the army rather than a separate entity (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Smith, 2001).[6] As a result of this, to view the Colombian conflict through the lens of several opposing elements or multiple actors is faulty, for the civil war is in fact a bipartisan conflict between the state and those conscious Colombians seeking emancipatory conditions. This then leads one to ask, how can the government of Colombia implement and support abuses against its own people? Why does the present Uribe administration support policies that physically, politically, and socially deny civil liberties to Colombians? To answer these questions an examination of the contextual social environment and the multidimensional economic and political importance of Colombia must take place.

Fiscal and Political Dimensions of Veiled Institutionalized Violence

Economically speaking Colombia holds a plethora of natural resources that carry a substantial monetary value *if* they are concentrated in the hands of a few and managed with surplus-value being of the utmost priority (Currie, 1966; 1971).[7] Colombia is also home to what could be a substantial supply of untapped oil, thus giving minority-world markets in North America easy access to the globally desired commodity (Scott, 2003; Leech, 2004b). The benefit of these oil-reserves however is more than sheer economic profit; in reality a great deal of the reserve's importance is political in scope.

North American markets need access to quick and cheap oil. Recent U.S. political and militaristic actions taken

against oil-rich regions in the Middle-East have resulted in oil supplies becoming exceedingly difficult to negotiate.[8] Compounding this problem for the U.S. is Venezuela[9]. Colombia's neighbor has one of the most important oil holdings in the world but is in direct opposition to U.S. foreign policy and deployments within the Andean region. In reverse, the United States has portrayed a less than supportive demeanor towards the socially-progressive economic and political practices of President Hugo Chávez (Guevera 2005; Harnecker 2005; Brittain, 2003; Gott 2001). Coming from this context, Colombia, coupled with the Uribe administration, has become an excellent partner for the United States when trying to procure an easily accessible oil supply and strongly needed ally in upper South America. With the Colombian government recognizing its importance they have enabled numerous incentives for multinational and transnational corporations (MNCs, TNCs) to "set up shop" within Colombia.[10] One important incentive was the previously discussed provision of allocating the employment of paramilitary forces, thus insuring consistent oil exploration and/or extraction, while countering insurgent activities against corporate assets (Leech, 2004a).[11] However, the paramilitaries are doing a great deal more than defending attacks against refinery pipelines. The paramilitary are using other methods of ensuring large profit values through the active targeting of union organizations, worker's collectives, and indigenous movements which are seen as deterrents to economic progress (NUPGE, 2004; Gareau, 2004).[12]

Supporting the maintenance of monetary centralization and minority interest is not a new theory within Colombian politics nor has it merely arisen through the "organic" structure of the state. This ideology has actually been realized for decades through the guidance of several developmental and economic theorists, in particular the Nova Scotian-born economist Lauchlin Currie (Brittain, 2005a). Currie (1971; 1981) wrote extensively on how natural resources

throughout Colombia (specifically in rural regions) must be monopolized so that Colombia's potential economic profits can be fully realized.[13] His theory of "accelerating economic development" and ideas of "dampening" socio-political resistance were, and continue to be, seen as the primary economic developmental model that directed decades of Colombian political administrations and continues to be utilized by the state today (Mondragon, 2001). Aspects such as these, while seeming out of place or of little importance, are central economic (and thus political) derivations to the current civil conflict.

Politically, Colombia is one of the most unique and important countries in the world. The reason that the country is of such contemporary geopolitical significance is that it contains the largest and most powerful Marxist-based insurgency movement in the Western Hemisphere. The FARC-EP has been in existence since 1964 and has been labeled as "the most important military and political force in South America opposing imperialism" (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003:299). The insurgency promotes the implementation of a socialist revolution in the optimism of providing a social and political alternative to the present continuation of imperialist expansionism (Brittain and Sacouman, forthcoming). By the late 1990s, the FARC-EP exemplified that it had become a substantial threat to the political stability and military capacity of the Colombian government, with little sign of slowing down (Cienfuegos, 2004; Petras, 2002; 1999; Ruiz, 2001; Pearce, 1990). Others extended this sentiment by arguing that the guerrilla forces cannot be defeated by the Colombian/United States offensive fueling the internal war (Braun, 2003; Ungerman and Brohy, 2003; KAIROS, 2001; Murch, 2000). Reading such statements allows one the ability to deduce that militarily the FARC-EP "poses the most powerful threat" to the Colombian government and to United States "dominance in the hemisphere" (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003:32).

Apart from the physical fortitude of the FARC-EP, the insurgency also provides an obstacle to majority-based economic concentration. The insurgency has implemented a class-based taxation system entitled *Bill 002*, which is a "tax for peace" to be collected "from those persons or corporations whose wealth is greater than \$1,000,000 US" (FARC-EP, 2000:1). The justification for such a "bill", according to the guerrilla organization, is that "trans-national corporations continue to loot our natural resources and the labour of our majorities" (2000:1; see also Leech, 2004b). Given the economic loss provoked by the tax, the "wealthy" are also anxious because the levies acquired are partially used to "improve" the insurgency's "military capabilities by modernizing its weaponry and improving the standard of living of its fighters" (Brittain and Sacouman, forthcoming; Richani, 2005; Leech, 2002:18).[14]

It is then obvious that such a system does not sit well with the owners, share-holders, and government officials for two specific reasons. Firstly, the tax allows the FARC-EP to extract income from the MNCs and TNCs, thus decreasing the full economic pot that could be acquired from their resource extraction. Secondly, the tax allows for the insurgency to increase its military capacity, thus increasing its affluence to fight the state and expand its colonization of remaining areas that are not under FARC-EP extension. Through using the paramilitary the affected (elite) groups had hoped to diminish the FARC-EP's objectives. To the dismay of those above, the FARC-EP proved, on numerous occasions, to be a far-superior military opponent due to its knowledge of the region coupled by its guerrilla-based tactics of warfare.[15] In response to the government's inability to defeat the FARC-EP directly, the state has taken an unconventional approach of paramilitarism and human rights abuse to try to trounce the guerrilla force, its support-base, and/or opponents to the government's policies and control.

The Numbers: A Nonexistent Analysis

The subject of human rights abuse within Colombia has received limited analysis, if any. In failing to examine the issue, minimal information of who tangibly commits these abuses has been revealed. Many popular-communication media have reported that most violations are a result of the civil war and the "actors" therein. Yet, when one examines Colombian human rights abuse data they recognize that this is a tremendous misrepresentation.

Percentage of Human Rights Violations in Colombia and Group Responsibility[16]

[See chart]

Sources: Gareau, 2004:214; NUPGE, 2004:2; HURIDOCs, 2003; Murillo and Avirama, 2003:89, 185-186; Stokes, 2003; Valenzuela, 2002:10; Colombian Commission of Jurists, 2001.

The author's findings have demonstrated that the state-sponsored far-right paramilitary are the leading architects of violence, torture, rape, and murder throughout the country.[17] This is not difficult to deduce in the simple fact that those assaulted – unionists, left-of-center political elements, and large portions of the campesino population – maintain a more communal-based practice of social interaction, which does not align with the right-wing ideology of the paramilitary and the existing Uribe administration. As a result, numerous popular-media outlets, journalists, and academics have failed to report that the majority perpetrators of abuses against non-combatants in Colombia is essentially the Colombian government.

Under the paramilitary pretense, the state has co-perpetuated violence, intimidation, and acts of murder to prolong political stability and economic influence. The Colombian state and military, in collaboration with the so-called United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), have

perpetuated the preponderance of human rights violations against the civilian population (see graph). The state and paramilitary have exemplified on numerous occasions their tremendous ferocity against the Colombian rural and urban population (see fn.17). In spite of this, the domestic and international popular-media alongside many learned institutions have made a conscious decision to under-examine or more blatantly silence analyses that present the state's role in committing violence against the people they are delegated to protect. This misinformation provides a misrepresentation of the reality of human rights abuses in Colombia and who is committing them.

Paramilitaries and the State: A Furtive Reactionary Alliance

In the purpose of dismantling oppositional socio-political organizations the Colombian government has creatively used the paramilitary card as an instrument to combat the supporters and expansion of antagonistic movements. Using this method allows the state to claim that the abuses taking place against the population are the result of non-affiliated paramilitary forces. This enables the government (and the supporting U.S. administration[s]) to shield international condemnation, thus continuing the flow of military and economic "aid" against what it now calls "the war against terror".[18]

The government has used methods of paramilitary-induced violence to excuse themselves from the charge of human rights abuses. The state and popular-communication media report that it is the paramilitary that is one of the architects of the internal violence, never exposing or making the connection that it is the state that has brought them into existence. As a result, the crimes against humanity therefore appear not to be carried out by the "state" per se, but are performed through the perceived external independent forces of the paramilitary (Coghlan, 2004).

Examining who the abusers are is undoubtedly important

but it is also necessary to illustrate those who are mistreated. Interestingly enough the non-combatants abused do not represent a broad milieu or spectrum of the Colombian population but are largely co-associated through a political demographic (politically active unionists, students, and campesinos, to name a few).[19] These persons, and many other critical members of Colombian society, are seen as a threat to the legitimacy and control of the Colombian government and elite minority; therefore, the state has deemed them as hindrances to political and economic interests (Vélez, 2003).[20] Since 2004, an outright assault against human and civil rights has occurred, not only against the individual (as many human rights abuses are perceived) but also toward the collective as well. Legalized detentions without cause or warrant (i.e., numerous members of FENSUAGRO); rural and urban unionists and communities being systematic targets of threats, torture, and murder (i.e. recent activities against the Comunidad de Paz de San Jose de Apartadó and the murder of three union members in Arauca in August 2004); the implementation of political genocide (i.e. Patriotic Union); and violent intimidation aimed at restricting political opponents (i.e. Colombian Communist Party, Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia) have all become daily certainties for critics of the Uribe administration and its new economic and "democratic security" policies. The proceeding exemplifies these statements.

Along a secondary road in Huila, anti-guerrilla units (linked to the AUC) have begun stopping all vehicles and conducting physical searches and immediate interrogations, which is not a new phenomenon. What is new however is that the soldiers have begun a campaign of intimidation by actively passing out coupons/flyers to those persons stopped indicating how they "ought" to vote. Through the coercive tactic campesinos in the region are indirectly forced to vote for how the state/combatants "encourage" them. If the people within the locality do not vote the way expected then the soldiers

will know in what region dissenters are located, thus opening the door to tremendous atrocities. It should be known however that these activities of coercion are not restricted to the rural regions alone but are being administered throughout the country. Just outside the Plaza de Bolivar, in the capital city of Bogotá, brigades of armored government SUV's have been seen with their windows down while armed guards hold signs telling people on the street to lift their thumbs in the air as a sign of political support. Through these measures, a false image is portrayed as state-controlled TV cameras film the "supportive" onlookers.[21] In relation to this the military has also begun detaining persons in the city who are discovered selling papers, literature, and/or music that is sympathetic to the insurgency or leftist political associations. In the past year a tyrannical campaign akin to that which took place during the 1980s and early 1990s against the Patriotic Union (UP) has also begun throughout the country.[22] Within the past eighteen months reports have arisen that hundreds of Colombian Communist Party (PCC) members have been murdered with over 70 being killed within a span of several weeks during the summer of 2004. It is feared that this is the beginning of another political genocide to limit the growth of leftists from the spectrum of Colombian politics and society, thus enabling the enhancement of the present neoconservative economic and militaristic policies of the Colombian government.[23]

Conclusion

The preceding analysis illustrates that the government of Colombia has purposely legitimized the paramilitary as an instrument constructed to violently respond to socio-political antagonists through the method of human rights abuse. Through presenting the above data on the contemporary reality of this ongoing issue within Colombia, it is hoped that the greater public obtains a stronger understanding of how the Colombian state has clandestinely profited from the pretense of

paramilitarism to maintain elite-based economic and political interests. Presenting these issues openly is one way in which the international community can come to understand what is taking place within Colombia: a strategic campaign to silence social and political movements that are in opposition to the economic, political, and militaristic policies of the Uribe administration; and what the people of the country are struggling against. The only way in which true integrity can come to Colombia is if other unionists, students, workers, and conscious persons unite with the people of Colombia in their struggle for social justice.

Footnotes

1. To go into detail as to why such a conflict has been in existence would take as much time to explain as the war has existed, thus detracting from the primary premise of the paper; examining what abuses have been committed against the people of Colombia and who has perpetuated such atrocities. Therefore, the proceeding pages largely leave out the theoretical and empirical reasons for the conflict's inception/continuance to explain the current realities of what is tangibly happening at the present.

2. Found within the Plaza de Bolivar, the *Capitolio Nacional* is where the Colombian Congress sits.

3. While President Álvaro Uribe Vélez was governor of Antioquia he personally put forth policies that were instrumental in the establishment of paramilitary groups (Livingstone, 2003:26; Scott, 2003:71-72; Leech, 2002:88; Defense Intelligence Agency, 1991).

4. These decrees could be thought of as a resurgence and modification to the 1968, Law 48 that permitted the formation of self-defense groups to protect large landowners and officials but deemed illegal in 1989 (Leech, 2002:25).

5. Until recently, the current political administration of Álvaro Uribe Vélez instituted a model of peasant soldiers to combat the FARC-EP (Wilson, 2003; Van Dongen, 2003a, 2003b; Murillo and Avirama, 2004:113-114). The model furthered the exploitation of the peasantry (who stood no match against the well trained and supplied forces of the FARC-EP) at the hands of the state, thus continuing the deaths of rural peoples throughout Colombia's countryside due to the direct apathy of the state apparatus. Marx (1989:144) stated that "primitive communities are not all cut to a single pattern" and in no way should any analyst believe that all peasants are complete in their uniformity. He openly states that some peasants will seek to benefit themselves and, in more viscous circumstances, seek to coercively support the large landowners through acting within "gang-systems" and "mercenaries" (1967:695-696,720).

6. An excellent description of the paramilitary link is skillfully illustrated by Javier Giraldo (1996). Giraldo examines how, since the mid 1980s, the Colombian state has developed a method where by the military clandestinely cooperates with "non-state" paramilitary entities.

7. If goods such as maize, yucca, bananas, coffee, coca, or sugar are grown/produced in isolated or small landholdings by peasants, semi-proletarians, or localized communities then their commodity value cannot be reaped by a specific owner or group of owners.

8. The other reality in purchasing oil from the Middle-East is the incredible costs that are induced through shipping the cargo over such a long distance; therefore it is easily understood that obtaining oil from South America is a great deal easier than from Iraq or Saudi Arabia.

9. Venezuela, the founding member of OPEC and the largest 'local' distributor of oil to the United States, has the fourth largest supply of consistent accessible oil in the world and the first within the Western Hemisphere (Gott, 2001;

O'Connor, 1962).

10. The Uribe administration has all but privatized the national oil industry (Ecopetrol). The government has allowed for MNCs and TNCs to a large extent "freely" extract oil from Colombia for external consumption through the elimination of past entrenched levies or tariffs (Leech, 2004b).

11. Insurgents have attacked pipelines to prevent the flow of oil through specific rebel-held territories, thus providing the government and economic allies a cloak of justification to use the said forces.

12. Recent examples of this can be recognized through present court actions against Drummond who is under investigation for using paramilitary forces to kill several unionists who were organizing workers (Nicaragua Solidarity Network, 2004). Chiquita Bananas has also admitted to hiring terrorists (AUC) to protect their interests (Colombia Solidarity Network, 2004; US/LEAP, 2004). On February 21st, 2005 several members of Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó (Peace Community of San José in the Apartadó municipality of the Antioquia department) were brutally murdered by members of the 17th Brigade of the Colombia Army, as stated by eye witnesses (Brittain, 2005b). The day of August 5th, 2004 saw three important Colombian unionists in the oil-rich department of Arauca (Héctor Alirio Martínez and Jorge Eduardo Prieto Chamusero were both the regional Presidents of the local farm workers' union (ADUC) and the hospital workers' union (ANTHOC) Leonel Goyeneche was the regional Treasurer for CUT) murdered by state forces.

13. Currie was the director of the first foreign mission of an international agency (International Bank for Reconciliation and Development – now called the World Bank), which took place in Colombia (Currie, 1950). Following the study Currie proposed the implementation of a developmental program for the country of Colombia through the "Accelerating Economic

Development", which promoted the organized displacement and transformation of the rural peasantry into a proletarian work force to be used in the large urban regions and the concentration of land ownership in the hands of large landholders.

14. The other portion is then used for "social and economic services, such as credit, public works, and cultural programs to the local peasantry" (Leech, 2002:18).

15. The FARC-EP has been very "successful" in armed confrontations with the paramilitaries. On several occasions relatively small groups of FARC-EP combatants have inflicted numerous casualties against the AUC (United Self Defense Forces of Colombia, the primary paramilitary group in Colombia) (Alape, 2000; Washington Post, 2004; Emanuelsson, 2003; Castro, 2003a; 2003b). In one campaign alone the FARC-EP killed over 254 soldiers, while the insurgency suffered only 11 wounded/killed guerrillas. This is a total ratio of 25:1 state and paramilitary forces to every guerrilla killed or wounded in action. In one historic month, over 1,360 state/paramilitary forces were killed by the guerrilla (who lost 252) (FARC-EP, 2002:8).

16. The graph depicts two specific outcomes. The first outcome is that the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), alongside the state, have perpetuated the preponderance of human rights violations against the population. By examining data on the subject, and not merely subscribing to unanalyzed or subjective reports, one can see that the FARC-EP and the ELN are responsible for roughly 5% (combined) of all internal violations, while the state/paramilitary are responsible for about 95%. This actually indicates that the insurgents human rights record over the past decade has substantially improved through a digression of maltreat being committed against non-combatants. It must be understood that this does not argue that the insurgents are exempt from human rights abuses (i.e. the retention of political representatives and members of the

economic elite). Rather this presents that the guerrilla have begun a consistently positive shift since 1995. The second outcome found in the data collected is that the level of abuse at the hands of the state is directly proportionate to the legitimate installation of the paramilitary (circa 1993). The state security forces abuses precipitously decrease in direct correlation to the paramilitary's maturity (i.e. compare the change from 1993 to 1998).

17. The number of human rights abuses is unable to be fully realized; nonetheless, one significant horrific instance of the actions conducted by the state/paramilitary took place on May 5th, 2003. The AUC and the army "attacked the indigenous Guahibo community at Betoyes [in Tame, Arauca]. Three Guahibo girls, ages 11, 12, and 15, were raped by the assailants. A pregnant 16-year-old, Omaira Fernández, was also raped, and then the attackers reportedly cut her womb open to pull out the fetus, which they hacked apart with machetes" (Fichtl, 2003), before throwing "both mutilated corpses into the river." (Engvist, 2003). Another example of the AUC's fascistic tendencies was presented in Bernard-Henri Lévy's new book *War, Evil, and the End of History* (2004). Lévy (2004:88) describes how members of the paramilitary organization have openly stated that "if any man, or any woman, has even the vaguest link with the guerrilla movement, then they stop being civilians and become guerrilla fighters dressed in civilian clothes, and as such deserve to be tortured, have their throats cut, to have a living hen sewed in their wombs in place of a foetus". The past leader of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, in interview, was sighted as chuckling at the notion of castrating Colombians who are in an antagonistic positioning against the Colombian State (Lévy, 2004:87). The AUC have also been found to decapitate peasants on a regular basis (Leech, 2003:68).

18. The ongoing struggle to defeat the guerrilla has led the Colombian government to use several inventive campaign names;

1960s-1970s it was called the "Cold-War", 1980's "War Against Narco-Guerrillas", the late 1990s saw the "War against Drugs" or "Plan Colombia", and presently it has been changed yet again to "The War on Terror" through "Plan Patriota".

19. This is not to say that some wealthier members of Colombian society are exempt from abuses, for they are certainly not (i.e. retentions are a common abuse carried out against the wealthy and political elite) (Coghlan, 2004; Braun, 2003). Nonetheless, in relation to the peasantry and working-class, this group is minimally affected by the war. What is being illustrated in this paper is that the abuses taking place in Colombia are ill-proportionately biased towards persons who are in opposition to the state, mainly the rural populations and class-conscious peoples.

20. Uribe has even considered Human Rights organizations and NGOs as being "spokesman" and "politickers for terrorism" (Vélez, 2003). Doug Stokes (2005:127-128) published other examples of the Colombian state threatening environmentalists, human rights groups, state-critical journalists and social justice mobilizations. Stokes (2005:127) presents that "Pedro Juan Moreno, Security and Intelligence Advisor to President Uribe, explicitly stated both that NGOs were legitimate targets of Colombian military intelligence and that they acted as front organizations for insurgent groups". He also notes that "Fernando Londoño, Uribe's [former] Minister of the Interior and Justice, even equated environmentalism with subversion and argued that there continued to exist an international communist conspiracy to undermine the Colombian military through environmental politics" (127-128)

21. SUV's, outfitted with film crews, drive through the streets as frightened pedestrians hold their thumbs in the air, simultaneously armed soldiers are purposely visible on every corner taking note of what people, local merchants, or vagrants do or do not lift their extremity in support.

22. The UP was a left-of-center political party which gained more democratic support than any leftist party in Colombian history. In the mid-1980s the Colombian government, large landowners, and the economic elite recognized the growth in support for the UP and responded with paramilitary forces who initiated an immediate campaign of political extermination against party leaders, members, secretaries, and even persons who passed out flyers for the party (Dudley, 2004; Aldana, 2002; Galvis, 2000). By 1996, over 4,000 had been intimidated, brutalized, tortured, raped, and murdered.

23. The PCC is incredibly tied to the union movement within Colombia. Many union leaders are members of this political entity, thus to kill a communist is seen as another technique to cripple organized labour.

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