



Nashville 2001 delegate action: Colombia Resolution

U.S. "Aid" to Colombia: Fuel on the Fire

"Just as lighter fluid among flames produces more fire, more arms produce more war in the middle of social conflict. This military 'aid' will not put an end to the war nor eradicate drug-trafficking. It will only increase the number of deaths and the suffering of the Colombian people...."

"Perhaps, brothers and sisters, it is precisely in order to support the Colombian churches in turning the governmental message of death from the North into life that God has placed you there in the nations of the North at this time, just as God did with Esther."

—*Excerpts from letter to North American churches from the Colombian Mennonite Church, July 2000*

"Plan Colombia"—FY 2000 and FY 2001

In 2000, the U.S. government approved nearly \$1.3 billion in aid to Colombia in order to "fight the drug war." The vast majority of the assistance—80 percent—was for Colombian military and security forces. Much of this military aid has already been delivered to Colombia.

"Andean Regional Initiative"—FY 2002

In early 2001, the U.S. government proposed a broader strategy, giving aid not only to Colombia but to its neighbors as well. This plan is called the Andean Regional Initiative.

The Andean Initiative includes a decrease in military and police aid for Colombia and an increase in economic and social aid. But it is still weighted toward security forces, which receive about 70 percent of the funds, with the remaining 30 percent designated for social programs.

Final funding for the Andean Regional Initiative was yet to be determined as of mid-November, but it will likely be around \$625 million. In 2002 the U.S. government will almost certainly propose sending additional money to the Colombian military.

There is growing criticism of the policy, however. Several amendments to decrease the military portion of the aid were offered in Congress this past year. Although these amendments were defeated, they represent increasing efforts to change the policy. With the continued efforts of peace and justice advocates, this momentum will continue to grow.

Advocacy Proposals

Colombian church members have outlined some policies that the United States could pursue which would promote peace, instead of furthering the violence in their country. These include: support for civil society and governmental peace initiatives, assistance for people displaced from their homes, encouragement of judicial reform, and economic development for small and medium-size producers, in order to provide an alternative to coca production.

This information was current as of November 2001. For continued updates on U.S. aid proposals, see the Center for International Policy's website at <www.ciponline.org/colombia/>.

—*Rachelle Schlabach, MCC Washington Office*

Prayer for Peace

From Janna Bowman, JustaPaz

The following prayer was inspired by a discussion in a "Moment for Peace" gathering held at the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church, Bogotá, Colombia. Each Wednesday from 12:30-1:30 p.m., church people, community members, and displaced families gather for a time of prayer, reflection, and social and political analysis. Last week we asked the question, "What is your prayer for sisters, brothers, and the government of the United States at this time?" This is what they said. May Christians in the North hear their cry and amplify their voice.

A Colombian Prayer for Peace

God of justice and peace, Holy Spirit that moves in our midst allowing us to love and forgive, we pray for a sweeping of the Spirit through the peoples of the world, a swelling of desire for closer relationship with you, and true peace among the nations. God of salvation, we pray for restoration and peace in Colombia. We place the United States before you, God, lifting before you our sisters and brothers of this great and powerful nation.

We plead for a pouring of your grace and wisdom upon them—strengthen and make bold those walking your nonviolent path. Touch the hearts of those hardened in the ways of violence and greed, fill them with uncertainty about their oppressive policies, and give them willingness to hear the words of those who give voice to your loving will.

We pray that they use their power for good and stun the world by granting pardon and gifting the nations with peace.

God, we know that weapons don't heal the wounds generated by conflict. At this moment we ask that the U.S. people, government, and economic powers help us sow seeds of love and peace in our Colombian soil so that one day we may enjoy these same fruits.

We cry out for an end to the systems and policies that impoverish our communities, intensify violence, and kill our food crops.

We pray that the leaders of Colombia speak on behalf of the majority, suggesting alternatives to military solutions that steal rather than give life to our nation.

And for ourselves, continue gracing us with the strength and will to struggle against the principalities and powers and for the coming of your kingdom on Earth. Even as we rise before the powers demanding an end to the exportation of war into our land, we humble ourselves before you, our King of kings and Lord of lords.

We who are tired of violent death and woundedness bow to the true God of salvation. Saving Grace, use us as instruments in the Spirit's work of restoration for peace.

Oh Lord, hear our prayer.

Amen.



Graphic Note: *Ojos de Buey, Ox Eyes, are large seeds harvested from a flowering vine growing in the jungles of southern Colombia, zones of escalating conflict. In his presentation at Nashville 2001, Ricardo Esquivia gave delegates Ox Eyes to symbolize the seeds of justice and peace Anabaptists have sown. Now it is time for the harvest.*