



## 2006 Days of Prayer & Action for Colombia



### Colombia Bulletin Quotes

*Below is basic background and general facts on Colombia. Also included below are reflective quotes on the situation in the country from Catholic Church leaders. Please feel free to use them in your bulletins and newsletters as we collectively focus on Colombia in the coming days.*

#### Background

Colombia continues to experience one of the worst human rights crises in the world. The current conflict is rooted in a long history of extreme inequality and political exclusion, though it has intensified in recent years due to the infusion of drug-related profits received by armed actors and substantial military aid from the U.S.

Colombia is the country from which 80% of the cocaine in the U.S. comes, as well as most of the heroin on the East Coast. It is one of the largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid, an aid package that, from the Church's point of view, has been excessively tilted toward anti-narcotics and counter-insurgency strategies. More focus is needed on local community development opportunities and the needs of thousands of people who have been forcibly displaced by the violence.

Colombia has become one of the most dangerous places for human rights workers, journalists, union leaders and church workers. In the last fifteen years hundreds of Catholic religious leaders, including bishops, priests, nuns, pastoral agents and Protestant pastors have been killed. Colombia needs to make more progress toward ending widespread impunity for human rights abusers. The State Department calls impunity the "greatest challenge to the credibility of the Government's commitment to human rights."

*Join Catholic Relief Services along with our ecumenical partners as we pray for an end to the violence and suffering in Colombia, and take action to influence policy change in the United States.*



#### Bulletin Quotes

"Colombia is experiencing one of the worst human rights crisis in the world. The current conflict in Colombia is rooted in a long history of extreme inequality and political exclusion, though it has intensified dramatically in recent years due in part to the infusion of drug related profits that many of the armed actors currently receive."  
*Colombia Update- USCCB/CRS Feb 2004*

"Peace is no more than respect for the inviolable rights of the person ..., while war is born of the violation of these rights and brings with it even graver violations of them." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

"We unite with the feeling of grassroots social organizations that humanitarian accords are needed to assist victims and reduce their suffering. We call on the country's ruling class to adopt the necessary will and political discipline, and on business sectors and the ... farm workers sector to commit their will and social discipline. Such actions are required to make viable the construction and implementation of policies, programmes and processes that generate necessary structural changes to recover and implement basic rights as a conditioning factor for reconciliation with social justice to bring about sustainable peace." *2005 National Reconciliation Conference of the Colombia Bishops*

"In the last decade some 60 Catholic religious leaders, including bishops, priests, nuns and seminarians, and even higher number of pastoral agents and Protestant pastors, have been killed. Colombia now has the second highest number of internally displaced persons in the world, displacement which disproportionately impacts Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities." *Catholic Relief Services*

"We must give peace weapons other than those that have been set aside for killing and destroying humanity. Above all, the weapons of morality are necessary." Let us cultivate attitudes of openness and of welcome, of respect, of truth and justice." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

"Let us make the apprenticeship of these values starting with the family, the school, the small neighborhood group." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

"The vast majority of Colombians are Roman Catholics. Churches have played an important role in peace-building in Colombia with the majority of Catholic Church representatives involved in international peace efforts at the local, national and regional levels." *Catholic Relief Services*

"There is no peace if there are not clear criteria for sustainable human development, for cultural, economic, political, juridical and ecological development. Thus a very broad agenda is essential for the journey toward peace." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

"We recognize the dignity that each Colombian man and woman has as a creature of God that has been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to this, we realize that the mandate "thou shalt not kill" seems to have been forgotten and we are submerged in an atmosphere of death. The attempts perpetrated against human life of individuals and groups, the negation of liberty by kidnapping, the denying of rights belonging to women, children and the elderly, the destruction of goods that are necessary for carrying out a dignified life, all these factors affect us terribly." *Colombian Bishops Conference*

"There will be peace to the degree that all humanity learns how to rediscover its original vocation to be a single human family..." Colombia is a part of the great human family. Therefore it welcomes the accompaniment of the international community, without that implying an acceptance of interference in the country's internal affairs. It is well aware of its role and co-responsibility with other nations in the fight against drugs and terrorism, and of its effective participation in a world that is moving toward globalization. In this context, "the re-orientation of international cooperation in terms of a new culture of solidarity" is most necessary." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

"Our purpose and goal is to work for an integral peace, to form a "culture of peace." As far as the armed conflict goes, once again we say what we believe: it will only be overcome through political negotiation, whose fundamental nucleus is the sincere and truthful dialogue between the parties involved in the search for a new vision for Colombia, within a framework of social justice and a new style of peaceful coexistence." *Colombian Bishops Conference*

"The building of consensus remains blocked by a failure to listen or an attitude of conceding nothing. Thus every process of dialogue or negotiation demands that we reject those "social sins which cry out to heaven" while not forgetting that "among these sins should be noted the sale of drugs, the laundering of illicit profits, corruption of every kind, the terror of violence (terrorism), the arms race, racial discrimination, the inequalities among the social groups, the irrational destruction of the environment." *Ten Principles for the Road toward Peace, Episcopal Conference of Colombia, 2002*

We believe that all armed factions, the state and civil society should take part in this reconciliation process. We recognise the need for the accompaniment and backing of the international community and all necessary efforts to restore social justice, peace and reconciliation." *2005 National Reconciliation Conference of the Colombia Bishops*

## Remembering the Victims and Rejoicing with the Peacemakers