



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)**  
*(formerly the Congressional Human Rights Caucus)*

**Hearing**

**HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA:**  
**THE CONTINUING CRISIS IN PUTUMAYO**

**Thursday, November 20, 2008**

**1:00 PM – 3:00 PM**

**2255 Rayburn HOB**

**Panelists**

**Ms. Blanca Nieves Galarraga Meneses:** A spokeswoman on behalf of the “disappeared” and the internally displaced, four of her children have “disappeared” and she has suffered displacement with her six grandchildren and two stepchildren. The story of her appeals to legal and security authorities in Putumayo and Nariño provide a roadmap to the difficulties facing families who are displaced and whose loved ones have “disappeared.” For the past six years, she has cared for 8 children, whose current ages range from 8 to 16 years.

**Ms. Ana Tulia Burbano Acosta:** For the past decade, Burbano Acosta has been the director of the Educational Institution of the San Carlos Rural School, in the rural municipality of La Dorada. Subject to FARC and paramilitary threats and violence, the school provides education, shelter, food and refuge to more than 230 students in one of the areas of heightened conflict.

**Ms. Emilse Bernal Bastidas:** President of the Campesino Association of Southwest Putumayo (ACSOMAYO), which includes 73 local advisory committees (Juntas de Acción Comunal), 5 indigenous *cabildos*, and 2 reservations of the Nasa, Embera, Inga and Awá indigenous peoples. Its members include over 13,000 campesinos and 2,300 indigenous people. Ms. Bernal assumed leadership after the murder of former president, Luis Melo, by paramilitaries in

Puerto Asís. ACSOMAYO represents people in the region with the greatest number of violations by the Colombian military, especially in cases of extrajudicial killings.

**Mr. Cesar Willington Chapal Quenama:** Coordinator of the Permanent Forum of the Cofán Nation and the Indigenous Communities of Valle del Guamuez. The Cofán Forum includes the Kitchua, Nasa, Embera, Awá and Siona nations (the Cofán and the Siona are communities considered by the United Nations to be in danger of extinction). These indigenous communities and peoples are threatened by violence by all armed actors, displaced from ancestral lands, and subject to colonization by non-indigenous and Colombian armed forces, as well as by the exploration and exploitation of petroleum.

**Ms. Fabiola Erazo Garcia:** Leader of Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres (Women's Peaceful Route) and the Alianza de Mujeres del Putumayo (Alliance of Putumayan Women), Erazo Garcia has been on the front lines of the struggle for truth and justice in one of the most violent regions of Putumayo in the municipality of Villagarzón.

**Ms. Nancy Sánchez Mendez,** Asociación Minga. Minga is a Colombian NGO in defense of human rights, with representatives throughout Colombia.