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CENTER NEWS

Colombia Human Rights Network

by Barbara Cochrane Alexander*

In May 1999, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Center) of the Washington College of Law (WCL) at American University partnered with several academic centers in Central and South America to develop the Inter-American Human Rights Academic Network (Inter-American Network). The Inter-American Network, in conjunction with the Center, has conducted multiple human rights training seminars for human rights professors in Central and South America with the goal that these professors will in turn replicate the experience in their home countries and regions, and extend the human rights training opportunities to human rights practitioners as well. To achieve this goal, the Center received a two-year, U.S.\$100,000 grant from the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development to develop the Columbia Human Rights Network. Currently, the Center is working with the *Universidad Nacional*, a public university, and the *Universidad de Los Andes*, a private university, located in Santa Fé de Bogotá, Colombia. The Columbia Human Rights Network is focused on preparing a diagnostic report on Colombia's human rights legal education, and developing and enhancing the capacity of human rights academicians to provide on-site legal training.

As part of its goals, the diagnostic report, scheduled for completion in spring 2001, seeks to analyze the current status of human rights legal education in Colombia. Six professors—María Fernanda Figueroa, Professor of Law at the *Universidad del Cauca*; Esther Parra Acuña, Professor of Law at the *Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga*; Iván Darío Ortiz, Director of the Clinic and Professor of Law at the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*; Clara Elena Reales, Director of the Juridical Research Department and Professor of Law at the *Universidad de Los Andes*; Nelson Socha, Professor of Law at the *Universidad de Los Andes*; and Luz Marina Tamayo, Professor of International Humanitarian Law in Colombia—are authoring the diagnostic report. This report, which will be available in Spanish, is part of the Columbia Human Rights Network's efforts to promote the role of Colombian law schools as developing institutions of human rights education. One problem scholars have detected is the lack of human rights courses offered in law schools in Colombia. According to Diego Rodríguez-Pinzón, Visiting Professor at WCL and Director of the Human Rights Education Part-

nership-Colombia at the Center, “[i]t is difficult to create a ‘culture of respect for human rights,’ if lawyers, who are primarily responsible for litigating, adjudicating, teaching, and implementing ‘rights’ in Colombia are not exposed to ‘human rights’ in their basic [training] as lawyers.”

Additionally, the Colombia Human Rights Network has held training sessions in Bogotá, between April 24–28, 2000, and in Washington, D.C., between December 4–8, 2000, at WCL. At the most recent training session, coordinated by Rodríguez-Pinzón, participants attended various lectures on a wide range of topics, including the Inter-American Human Rights System and its commission and court; economic, social, and cultural rights; international human rights activism; and Plan Colombia, among others. On December 6, 2000, Professor Joseph Eldridge of American University moderated a panel discussion on Plan Colombia. The training session included the following panelists: Reinaldo Botero, Director of the Presidential Program for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Colombia; Adam Isaacson, Senior Associate at the Center for International Policy; Michael Shifter, Senior Fellow with the Inter-American Dialogue; and Carlos Salinas, Amnesty International U.S.A.'s Advocacy Director for Latin America. Plan Colombia is a U.S.\$7.5 billion aid package consisting of U.S.\$4 billion of Colombian resources, pledged by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana, and U.S.\$3.5 billion from foreign donors. The U.S. contribution includes U.S.\$122 million for programs to promote human rights, the peace process, and rule of law in Colombia.

The December 2000 training session also included a visit to the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and visits to the Center for Justice and International Law and the United States Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C. A third training session is planned for the last week of March 2001, in Bogotá, Colombia. To date, the Columbia Human Rights Network has succeeded in reaching an important sector of Colombia's human rights academic community and hopes to continue to build on this accomplishment. 🌐

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ensure safe repatriation of victims to their countries of origin. The victims are, in effect, then delivered back into the same conditions from which they were trafficked and are at risk of revictimization.

Conclusion

The Protocol is a significant law enforcement accomplishment. It marks the development of a comprehensive definition of trafficking in persons and offers an effective framework for combating it through prevention, law enforcement, protection, and repatriation. It also is the first international agreement to provide some mandatory and many detailed provisions for victims of crime. With 81 signatories,

the Protocol's wide acceptance bodes well for the number of countries that will be drafting and implementing their own trafficking laws. The ultimate judgment of its impact, however, will be determined by the level of victim protections State Parties choose to incorporate into their domestic law. State Parties should recognize that the victim assistance outlined by the Protocol is not exhaustive of the services that victims require. To the contrary, the Protocol establishes minimum requirements that State Parties are free to supplement and augment through their domestic law. Therefore, State Parties must be urged to enhance victim assistance and protection when creating their trafficking laws to better protect trafficking victims' human rights. 🌐

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