

RESOLUTION TO END THE CIVIL WAR IN COLOMBIA

We, the official delegate body of the Central Plains Mennonite Church Conference, along with other members of the church, wish to address the issue of the civil war in Colombia.

We speak from our faith in Jesus Christ and from our history as a Christian people who have believed in and attempted to practice ways of peace and love.

Our concern for the situation in Colombia is informed by regular reports from the Mennonite Church of Colombia, whose leaders have repeatedly called upon the Mennonite Churches in the United States to help them end the civil war in their country. We have also received frequent communications from other church and peace groups in that troubled land. The following statements are based largely on these sources, which give information not always found in the mainstream media.

We know that for more than 50 years Colombians have been living in serious social, political, and economic realities that have produced a culture of violence, a badly damaged economic infrastructure and a fragmented, desperate civil society that leaves millions of common people's life-dreams frustrated.

We understand that over 3.8 million now internally displaced Colombians were forced to flee from their rural lands where guerillas and paramilitary forces brutally vie for control of territory. We are told that the problems resulting from this ongoing conflict have been aggravated over the past 25 years by the terrible drug-trafficking business, which has its root in the demand of illegal drugs in our country and elsewhere.

We are informed that, under the framework of a "war on drugs", the United States has become a partner with Colombian armed forces in a counter-narcotics campaign that is devastating the country by stepping up the levels of violence on all sides through military "aid". Thus, the American assistance, through Plan Colombia, brings death and destruction, instead of life, hope and security to the Colombian people.

We are told that the coca fumigation efforts of Plan Colombia have destroyed food crops and caused sickness of both humans and animals, only to drive desperate people elsewhere to grow coca and cash crops, as well as intensifying the conflict between guerrilla and paramilitary groups.

We believe that Plan Colombia does not adequately address the long-standing problems of extremely unequal distribution of wealth, injustice and violence. Instead, with its military assistance aspect, it exacerbates these problems and increases the frustration and misery of the majority of Colombian people.

We recognize that the Colombian situation is very complex and that it is exacerbated by the demand for drugs in our country. We do not have easy answers to the problems that beset Colombia. However, we lament, along with our Colombian brothers and sisters, the decision of the United States government to send funds and support to the Colombian security forces.

Therefore, be it resolved that:

We, the Central Plains Mennonite Church Conference delegates, meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska on June 19-22, 2008, hereby express solidarity and support for the churches and agencies in Colombia who have borne the heavy burden of cultivating peace in a culture of violence. We pledge our support for initiatives that uphold human

