



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1393-2008, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1393

Resolution denouncing the continued violence in Colombia and calling upon all parties to cease all violent attacks against civilians and respect their human rights.

By Council Members Reyna, Mendez, Brewer, Fidler, James, Mealy, Sanders Jr. and Weprin

Whereas, Colombia is the fourth largest country in South America and one of the continent's most populous nations, with over 44 million people; and

Whereas, According to the 2000 Census, it is estimated that about one million Colombians live in the United States, with 84,404 living in the New York City area, and 13,338 residing in Jackson Heights, Queens alone; and

Whereas, According to an article appearing in the July 12, 2006 issue of The New York Times, Colombia is a strong U.S. ally and has received \$4 billion in aid since 2000, mostly for military and counternarcotics purposes; and

Whereas, Even though Colombia is a formal democracy, the people of this country have been subjected to over 40 years of violent conflict involving outlawed armed groups, drug cartels and gross violations of human rights; and

Whereas, Specifically, since the 1960s, there has been conflict between government forces and anti-government insurgent groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which is the largest rebel group in Latin America, the National Liberation Army (ELN), and paramilitary groups like the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC); and

Whereas, Such competing anti-government organizations have attempted to gain political power through terrorist acts such as torture, extortion, kidnappings, assassinations, massacres, and bombings,

including the use of land mines; and

Whereas, According to the The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 40,000 people, most of them civilians, have been killed in Colombia as a result of the armed conflict since 1990 alone; and

Whereas, According to the Colombian National Labor Union Institute (Escuela Nacional Sindical), 2,650 trade unionists have been assassinated since January 1986; and

Whereas, According to a report conducted by the National Union of Public and General Employees, 687 people were kidnapped and more than 17,000 were murdered in Colombia in 2007; and

Whereas, UNHCR has also reported that Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced people in the western hemisphere, and the second largest displaced population in the world after Sudan; and

Whereas, The Global Information Network reported that from January to September 2006, more than 172,000 people were forcibly displaced from their homes and land (totaling an average of 637 a day), and a total of 3.7 million people have been displaced by violence in civil war-torn Colombia in the past 20 years, according to statistics released by Marco Romero, president of the Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES), a local rights group; and

Whereas, According to the UNHCR, Colombians are increasingly fleeing over the country's borders, most notably to Costa Rica and Ecuador (but also Panama and Venezuela), as well as to the United States and Europe, resulting in more than 100,000 Colombians seeking asylum abroad since 2000; and

Whereas, The BBC news reported that in July 2007, hundreds of thousands of people in Colombia staged nationwide protests against the kidnappings and the civil conflict that has afflicted their country for over 40 years, demanding the release of some 3,000 people still being held hostage by various rebel groups; and

Whereas, According to the American Magazine, between 2002 and 2006, Colombia reduced the number of murders by 40 percent, the number of terrorist attacks by 63 percent, and the number of kidnappings by 76 percent, and more than 33,000 paramilitary fighters have been demobilized; and

Whereas, Despite the decrease in violence in recent years, insurgents persist in waging violent attacks against civilians and, therefore, continued efforts must be made to protect the human rights of all victims affected by this long-standing civil war; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York denounces the continued violence in Colombia and calls upon all parties to cease all violent attacks against civilians and respect their human rights.

LS# 4834
TC
3/25/08
11:30am