



## NATIONAL MOBILIZATION OF WOMEN TO CHOCO 25 November 2005

### For the demilitarization of the territory and of civil life

*3,000 women headed for Quibdo,  
against fear and indifference*

The women of Ruta Pacifica, in solidarity with the Afro-Colombian women and the indigenous women of Choco, wish to denounce the effects of the armed conflict on their lives and bodies, declaring in unison: **THE BODIES OF WOMEN ARE NOT BOOTY OF WAR.**

As a women's movement, we denounce the violations of the rights to life, freedom of expression, assembly and participation of which the children, young girls and adult women, leaders of communities seeking self-determination, humanitarian zones and community councils in Choco have also been victims.

Said violations of their human rights and of international humanitarian law inflicted by the armed actors (guerillas and paramilitaries) and the Public Security Forces affect the organizational processes of the black communities and, in the case at hand, that of the Afro-Chocanas and the indigenous women.

Within the framework of this grave humanitarian crisis, we have also the loss of collective title to the lands of the black communities, especially the ones located along the river basins of Jiguamiando and Curvarado where rural inhabitants have denounced before the national and international communities the paramilitaries' systematic violations of their human rights and the violent plundering of their ancestral lands, which are being deforested for the cultivation of the African palm.

Forced internal displacement and confinement are two features of the crisis this department is experiencing:

- According to the *Sistema Unico de Registro de Accion Social* (formerly the *Red de Solidaridad Social*), between 1996 and 30 September 2005, the department of Choco has dislodged 20,195 families, consisting of 90,432 persons, and has received 13,754 families, with 61,006 persons. Eighty percent (80%) of the displaced families in this area of the country are single parent families with a female head of household.
- During this year, massive displacements have been recorded in the municipalities of Bajo Baudó, Bojaya, Medio Atrato, Río Sucio, and Quibdó, with 1,204 families being displaced.
- The confinement of the black and indigenous communities is reflected in the restriction of free circulation of goods indispensable for survival, that is to say, economic blockages, limitations on food, medications and fuel; and restriction on their freedom to circulate and to mobilize to protect their lives.

According to the United Nations, during the first half of 2001, 100,000 villagers remained confined in the Atrato river basin area. Of these, 20,000 are indigenous and the remainder blacks.

Violence is a daily reality in the lives of the women of Choco, which is aggravated within the framework of the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis:

- In Carmen del Darien, on 4 May 2002, in the rural area of Rio Sucio, "Paramilitaries raped a minor". (1)
- In February 2003, an infantryman from the Naval Base located in Bahia Solano, violently attacked a nurse who was performing her year's rural duty at the base. As a result of being sexually abused and brutally beaten, the woman ended up a quadriplegic...(2)
- In 2004 in the city of Quibdo, 294 judgments regarding family violence were issued, of which 26 were violations against female children and 218 against adult women, which represents 83% of the total number of judgments rendered. (3)
- In the period 2003-2004, 241 cases of sexual violence against women and girls were denounced. Of these, 153 were girls and 62 adult women.

The women of Ruta Pacifica who are mobilizing towards Choco as of 23 November, repudiate this conflict and this war, which is costing the lives of many men of Choco, as well as the lives of children, young people and Afro-Colombian and indigenous women of Choco; we reject the structural violence of poverty and extreme hunger, historic in this territory because of indifference and persistent abandonment by the government of Colombia and the persistent deterioration of the conflict and actions of the armed actors.

We will demand a politically negotiated solution to the armed conflict, so that PEACE may be possible; so that the indigenous and Afro-Colombian women of Choco can go back to fishing, planting and harvesting in peace, and to work in the mines; so that they can have unrestricted access to food; so that children, both male and female, can go to school and not to war; so that women do not become widows and the children orphans; so that the black communities may keep their lands and their cultural traditions. Let there be PEACE, a peace that will return to the inhabitants of Choco, **rivers of life!**

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## **RUTA PACIFICA DE LAS MUJERES**

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(1) Revista Noche y Niebla No. 24, April, May and June 2002.

(2) Revista Noche y Niebla No. 27, January, February, March 2003.

(3) INSTITUTO COLOMBIANO DE MEDICINA LEGAL Y CIENCIAS FORENSES, Seccional Choco.

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