



CrossCurrents

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Conference Tackles Youth Gang Violence in Central America

By Geoff Thale

The audience was diverse. In the first row sat a Central American ambassador, suited and diplomatic. One row back and to his left, sat a young man with a shaven head and a T-shirt proclaiming him a member of the “Nueva Generación XXI.” There were U.S. government officials, Central American police officers, staff from U.S. social service agencies that work with at-risk Latino teenagers, public health professionals, and others. More than 300 people attended a conference on youth gang violence in Central America, sponsored by WOLA, the Pan-American Health Organization, the Due Process of Law Foundation, and the Inter-American Coalition for the Prevention of Violence, in late February.

WOLA helped organize the conference out of concern for the problems that youth gang violence in Central America presents, both for public security and for human rights. Youth gangs are a growing problem in the region, just as they are in the United States. In El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, and to a lesser extent in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and in the Mexican state of Chiapas, gangs engage in petty crime, extortion, and turf battles. In some places, gangs are involved in drug sales, and are seeking to control the networks of “coyotes” who smuggle people across borders.

The real size, extent, and level of organization of Central American gangs is not clear—little serious research has been done, and claims about membership and structure vary wildly. But there is no doubt that the problem is a serious one. Criminal activity by youth gangs plagues communities, and some gangs may be on the verge of becoming involved in organized crime.

Central American governments are struggling to respond to this difficult problem. In countries with relatively weak police forces and troubled criminal justice systems, where youth unemployment levels are high, youth violence in general—and youth gangs in particular—pose difficult challenges.

Unfortunately, governments and political elites in the region have tended to respond primarily with authoritarian policing practices. Carrying out what Salvadoran President Tony Saca has called “super mano dura” or “iron-fisted” strategies, police in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala have conducted sweeps in high crime neighborhoods, arresting hundreds of young men who have tattoos or clothing perceived as gang membership markers, and charging them with newly defined crimes such as “gang

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Youth Gang Violence

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membership.” Governments have moved to lengthen criminal sentences, and to try many teenagers as adults. The result has been to overburden the criminal justice system, and fill already overcrowded jails.

Groups like Casa Alianza have charged that police in Honduras and Guatemala have carried out extrajudicial executions, targeting young men perceived to be gang leaders or particularly troublesome members. Meanwhile, a deteriorating situation in the overcrowded Honduran and Salvadoran prison systems has contributed to deadly fires and gang-related riots that have caused 216 inmate deaths in the last two years, with many more injured.

These approaches do have short term results—neighborhoods in which the police conduct sweeps see immediate reductions in gang activity. But their impact is short-lived, as gangs re-appear in neighborhoods, and Central American crime rates stay high. They do nothing to resolve the underlying social conditions that lead young people to become involved in gangs, and, by giving police authority to carry out arbitrary arrests, they move backwards on the reforms in policing and in the criminal justice system that Central American countries have made since the end of the region’s civil wars.

There are many critics of these hard line approaches in Central America. Many of WOLA’s counterparts in the human rights community have criticized the arbitrary arrests and criminalization of appearance that are part of the “mano dura” approach. Catholic bishops in Honduras and El Salvador, who sponsor rehabilitation programs for young people seeking to leave gangs, have been vocal critics, as have leaders in Protestant and some evangelical churches. Some government officials in both Guatemala and El Salvador have called for a greater

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Blurring the Lines

Last fall, WOLA published a report expressing concern that the clear line between law enforcement and military roles was being blurred in Latin America. In Central America, with its history of military involvement in internal security and military intervention in government, it is crucial to maintain the line that separates the military from the police and public security systems.

Some proposals on how to address the issue of youth gang violence run the risk of blurring that line. Some in Central America have suggested that Central American militaries ought to play a role in combating gang violence, with soldiers deployed to back up police in high crime neighborhoods. Some in the U.S. have suggested that the U.S. military ought to play a role, in training counterparts in Central America, or in protecting the U.S. against the security threat that gangs might pose to the United States.

Gen. Bantz Craddock, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Southern Command, discussing “threats which U.S. and partner nation security forces must actively combat,” told the House Armed Services Committee in March that youth gangs were an “especially troublesome” issue. In response, WOLA Executive Director Joy Olson commented, “Youth gang violence is a serious problem, but a complex one that requires solutions that embrace social services, education, economic development and law enforcement. It’s not a problem that lends itself to a military solution.”

In the course of its work on youth gang violence, WOLA seeks to maintain the bright line between military and law enforcement roles in Central America.

700 Participate in Cuba Action Day on Capitol Hill

by Geoff Thale

On April 27th, some 700 people came to Washington to participate in “Cuba Action Day,” a day of education and advocacy sponsored by WOLA, the Latin America Working Group, and the Freedom to Travel Project of the Center for International Policy. Hundreds participated in a prayer breakfast and orientation session in a church near the Capitol. Over 650 people from across the nation jammed into a hotel ballroom near the Senate to hear Members of Congress, Cuban-Americans, academics, business and religious leaders, and others call for an end to the ban on travel to Cuba; the Members of Congress who spoke announced that they had introduced legislation to end the travel ban. Then participants fanned out to talk with their Members of Congress about why the travel ban must end.

In the last year, the Bush Administration has further tightened restrictions on U.S. travel to Cuba. Measures put into place prohibit Cuban-Americans from visiting family more than once in three years, with no exceptions for health emergencies or deaths in the family. Other measures have led to the cancellation of 90% of the university-based student study abroad programs to Cuba. These come on top of earlier measures that eliminated “people to people” educational travel—educational visits organized not for academic credit but to allow interested U.S. citizens to see and learn about Cuba.

At the same time, the Administration has moved to deny visas to many Cubans seeking to travel to the United States. Seventy-five Cuban scholars planning to attend a meeting of the Latin American Studies Association were denied visas last year. A number of Cuban scientists seeking to attend conferences or participate in programs with U.S. scientists were also denied visas, as were some Cuban religious leaders invited to

Cuba Action Day was the response, in which hundreds of people from affected constituencies—Cuban-Americans unable to visit relatives, university faculty members unable to organize student study abroad trips, religious activists limited in their contact with church counterparts and others—came to Washington to express their displeasure, and to urge an end to the ban on travel to Cuba.



Sargent Carlos Lazo, shown here speaking at Cuba Action Day, served with the National Guard in Iraq, but was unable to visit his sons in Cuba while on leave due to U.S. travel restrictions that now limit family visits to Cuba to once every three years.

speak to church groups in the United States.

Together, these measures have significantly reduced U.S.-Cuban contact, and impacted constituencies in the United States. Cuba Action Day was the response, in which hundreds of people from affected constituencies—Cuban-Americans unable to visit relatives, university faculty members unable to organize student study abroad trips, religious activists limited in their contact with church counterparts and others—came to Washington to express their displeasure, and to urge an end to the ban on travel to Cuba. More than a hundred Cuban-Americans participated, from Florida, New Jersey, and other areas. There were more than seventy-five academic participants, many of them

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Independent Experts to Identify Unknown Murder Victims in Juárez, Mexico

By Laurie Freeman

Hundreds of women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico over the past several years with grossly inadequate investigation by government authorities. One of the most serious deficiencies is the authorities' failure to positively and accurately identify the remains of many victims. This exacerbates the anguish of families of missing and murdered women, who wonder if the unidentified victims may be their daughters, or who have doubts about whether the remains they buried are actually those of their loved ones.

Now, however, these families are closer to knowing with certainty the identities of the victims. An independent team of forensic experts from Argentina has begun working to exhume and identify remains of unidentified female murder victims, as well as those victims whose families have doubts about the results of prior forensic testing. This is an important first step towards alleviating families' anguish and uncertainty, guaranteeing their rights to truth and justice, enhancing transparency of local judicial institutions, and improving local forensic capacity.

Since 1993, over 400 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez and neighboring Chihuahua City. Of that number, human rights organizations estimate that at least 53 of the victims, perhaps as many as 75, have not been positively identified (numbers vary due to poor record-keeping by judicial authorities). A roughly equal number of women are considered missing (again, numbers vary). Positive identification is needed to return the victims' remains to their families; for now, they are kept in the state

medical examiner's facility or buried anonymously in common graves.

In other cases, authorities claim to have identified victims, but the forensic tests have been so flawed that some families have doubts about whether the bodies they buried are actually their missing loved ones. For example, in one case from 1998, the family of a missing woman requested DNA testing to determine if a body found on the outskirts of Juárez belonged to their daughter. The first test came out negative, but the authorities did a second test, which came out positive. After burying the remains, nagging doubts led the family to ask for an exhumation and further DNA testing. Their uncertainty was aggravated when they saw from the forensic report that the wrong grave had been exhumed. They are unable to accept that their daughter is dead – to do so would be to give up hope that she might still be alive. As her mother explained, she lives every day hoping that, "I'll turn around and see her walking down

the street." But they are also unable to grieve her death and begin the healing process.

Such widespread negligence and incompetence by governmental forensic workers made the families unwilling to trust official testing, regardless of whether official capacity was improved through training or better equipment. Instead, the families called for an independent team of forensic scientists to identify the murder victims.

With that in mind, WOLA contacted the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (*Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense*, EAAF) about the possibility of undertaking efforts to identify victims in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua. The EAAF is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that applies forensic sciences to



Crosses mark the gravesites of young women murdered in Ciudad Juárez.

the investigation of human rights violations worldwide. Established in 1984 to investigate the cases of the disappeared in Argentina, EAAF now works throughout the world to identify victims of human rights violations, return the victims' remains to their families, and present evidence to relevant judicial and investigative bodies. Throughout the process, EAAF works closely with victims' relatives and with local human rights organizations, and in doing so, is able to gain their trust and cooperation. The EAAF also involves local professionals in the investigative process in order to strengthen local capacity.

The non-governmental Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH) invited the EAAF to conduct a preliminary mission to Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua in June 2004. There they reviewed official forensic documents and met with victims' families, human rights organizations, and state and federal law enforcement officials, in order to come up with a proposal for carrying out forensic identification work.


The EAAF found serious methodological and diagnostic problems in all phases of the forensic work, including how victims' remains were recovered and analyzed. They proposed forming an independent, inter-disciplinary team of Mexican and international forensic doctors, pathologists, anthropologists, odontologists, and geneticists to recover and analyze all the cases of unidentified remains, as well as build a database with physical and genetic information of the victims, missing women, and their families. They also proposed setting up an independent team of lawyers to coordinate and facilitate communication between the forensic team, victims' relatives, prosecutorial and judicial officials, and municipal institutions such as cemeteries. The forensic team would meet weekly with families in order to explain their work and share any progress.

Since 1993, over 400 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez and neighboring Chihuahua City. Of that number, human rights organizations estimate that at least 53 of the victims, perhaps as many as 75, have not been positively identified.

In May 2005, the EAAF's proposal was accepted in full by Patricia González, Attorney General for the state of Chihuahua. A contract was signed the following month and the EAAF began working in Juárez on June 20.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing funding for part of the project, along with the government of the State of Chihuahua. This project is strongly supported by the U.S. Congress, particularly by Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA) and Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). Solis initiated a concurrent resolution on the murders of women in Juárez after returning from a WOLA delegation there. The resolution expresses congressional support for "efforts to identify unknown victims through forensic analysis, including DNA testing, conducted by

independent, impartial experts who are sensitive to the special needs and concerns of the victims' families, as well as efforts to make these services available to any families who have doubts about the results of prior forensic testing."

This effort is an important step in the long and difficult process of addressing the murders of women in Juárez and Chihuahua. First and foremost, at the project's heart are the needs of the families. The project came out of their demands for truth and transparency, and will provide them with at least some answers. Hopefully this process will also empower the victims' families to demand thorough investigations into the murders. Furthermore, the project will help make local law enforcement institutions more transparent, accountable, and responsive to the public. It will also build the capacity of the Mexican forensics officials working alongside the EAAF, so that they will be able to accurately recover and analyze evidence—the basis for sound criminal investigations and prosecutions. 

Washington Policy Work

- ▷ As part of WOLA's ongoing engagement with the U.S. Southern Command, Executive Director Joy Olson and Senior Fellow George Withers traveled to Miami in March for briefings at the SouthCom headquarters and the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force (JIATF), which coordinates interdiction efforts. This was the JIATF's first visit by an NGO. In Washington, WOLA hosted a discussion between SouthCom Commander General Craddock and human rights organizations, raising concerns about drug policy, U.S. involvement in Colombia, detentions at Guantanamo Bay, and U.S. military assistance and training. George Withers also researched and produced a memo for policymakers detailing concerns with *Enduring Friendship*, a regional naval initiative being promoted by the Administration.
- ▷ WOLA's April 19th Capitol Hill conference, *The Colombian Conflict: Regional Impact and Policy Responses*, convened a remarkable group of scholars, advocates and experts from Colombia, Venezuela and Peru for a far-reaching analysis of U.S. policy in Colombia and the effects of the conflict on regional dynamics. Speakers included Colombian Congressman Luis Fernando Velasco Chaves, former Colombian Peace Commissioner Daniel García-Peña Jaramillo, and Susana Villarán of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. A rapporteur's report is forthcoming. Panelists also spoke at a WOLA co-sponsored seminar at the George Washington University.
- ▷ **Cuba** Action Day demonstrated overwhelming opposition to current U.S. policy toward Cuba. On April 27th, some 700 people from across the country came to Capitol Hill to participate in forums and lobby Congress to end the travel ban. See article, p. 3.

- ▷ At the request of House International Relations Committee staff, WOLA took part in a series of three briefings on **Colombia**. Panelists from WOLA's Colombia conference presented on the paramilitary demobilization process, Senior Associate John Walsh spoke about U.S. drug control policy, and Deputy Director Kimberly Stanton gave recommendations for recasting U.S. policy priorities toward Colombia.
- ▷ A February conference entitled: *Voices from the Field: Local Initiatives and New Research on Youth Gang Violence in Central America* identified promising programs combating gang violence and fostered dialogue among those involved both in the United States and Central America. See article, p. 1.

“Outside the Beltway” Policy Work

- ▷ This spring, WOLA's new book, *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy*, hit the road. The book was enthusiastically received in six major cities throughout the United States. The presentations stimulated debate on **drug policy** outside of Washington, and included events in Boston, Chicago, Miami, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco.
- ▷ WOLA continues to play a unique and important role monitoring **hemispheric security policy** at the Organization of American States. In this vein, Gastón Chillier and Laurie Freeman attended the June OAS General Assembly meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida as observers. Gastón Chillier gave a presentation to heads of delegations and civil society organizations expressing concern about the blurring of lines between defense and security within the context of the OAS's new, multi-dimensional concept of security. The General Assembly adopted a WOLA-

proposed resolution on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, calling for OAS guidelines based on recommendations by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Presenting Latin American Voices

- ▷ Representatives from five **Guatemalan** human rights organizations—SEDEM, CALDH, CIACS, COS, and Myrna Mack Foundation—came to Washington, DC in February to discuss military reform, efforts to investigate illegal armed groups in Guatemala,



Photo by Miguel Angel Alvarez

Emilio Gonbaud of the Alliance for the Prevention of Crime in Guatemala and Jose Miguel Cruz, sociologist at the University of Central America participate in the gangs conference.

and violence against women with Congressional offices, the State Department, embassies, DC-based NGOs, and multilateral banks. As part of their efforts to inform policymakers about the current situation of women in Guatemala, the visitors gave presentations at a Congressional briefing sponsored by Rep. Hilda Solis.

- ▷ Oxfam America and WOLA hosted a group of three representatives from Iniciativa CID, a broad-based civil society network in Central America to share their concerns about the potential impact of **CAFTA**. They discussed agriculture, intellectual property rights, the environment, sustainable development, and alternatives for integration and development in Central America. In a three-day period, they met with twenty Congressional offices, gave presentations at a Congressional briefing hosted by Rep. Grijalva, and were interviewed by the Washington Post and El Pregonero.
- ▷ In May, WOLA hosted a visit from representatives of the Argentine, Peruvian, and Guatemalan forensic anthropology teams involved in the *Latin American Initiative for the Identification of the Disappeared*. WOLA facilitated meetings with State Department officials, congressional offices, human rights groups and other organizations in an effort to gather support and seek funding for the initiative, which aims to use forensic anthropology and DNA technology to identify victims of forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions resulting from the decades of military dictatorships and internal armed conflicts in Latin America.

WOLA in Latin America

- ▷ Adriana Beltrán traveled to **Guatemala** for three weeks in April and May. In conjunction with *Asociación DOSES* and the Human Rights Coalition for the Investigation of Clandestine groups, WOLA co-sponsored a two-day seminar for Guatemalan journalists on methods for investigating organized crime and illegal armed groups. WOLA invited renowned journalist and expert on organized crime in the former Soviet Union, Stephen Handelman, to lead the workshop. Adriana's visit also included meetings with Guatemalan government officials, international donors, academics, and NGOs to discuss the issues of violence against women, military reform, and mining in Guatemala. She traveled to various mining villages to meet with the communities and investigate the impacts of mining on the environment and rights of the indigenous.
- ▷ Gastón Chillier traveled to Cartagena, **Colombia** in February to attend a civil society event organized to coincide with the international donor's meeting for Colombia. WOLA lobbied donor governments



Executive Director Joy Olson speaks at a press conference promoting congressional resolutions on the murder of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, Mexico. Senator Bingaman, sponsor of the Senate resolution, looks on.

to continue conditioning international assistance on improvements in Colombia's human rights record and to promote a legal framework to govern the paramilitary demobilization honoring the principles of truth, justice, and reparations for victims of human rights violations. Gastón Chillier also traveled to Colombia in May, meeting with government representatives, including Vice President Santos, and civil society organizations to express concerns about pending legislation in Colombia on the paramilitary demobilization.

- ▷ To further develop WOLA's **Rights and Development** work in **Brazil**, Jeff Vogt traveled to Curitiba, Brasilia, and Maraba in May 2005. His trip coincided with a peasant march on the capital organized by the Movimento dos Sem Terra (MST) and enabled him to meet with a wide variety of organizations, individuals, and government representatives working on issues of human rights, agrarian reform, and rural development in Brazil.
- ▷ In April, Jeff Vogt traveled to Lima, **Peru** to participate in a week-long meeting with civil society organizations that coincided with the ninth round of negotiations for the Andean Free Trade Agreement (**AFTA**). The purpose of the meeting was to monitor progress in the negotiations, discuss alternatives to the proposed agreement, and develop a regional strategy to promote a more equitable trade framework.

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WOLA in the News

- ▷ WOLA was frequently cited in the media on the poor results of **U.S. drug control policy**, especially during the March release of the State Department's *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (INCSR), the annual report on drug war progress. The White House tried to hide the poor results by quietly releasing statistics on hectares of coca cultivation in Colombia at a later date, but WOLA's press work countered the move. John Walsh told the Associated Press, "The U.S. government's own data provides stark evidence that the drug war is failing to achieve its most basic objectives." Forty-nine news outlets, including the Washington Post, ran the article. The Miami Herald, the Economist, *El Nuevo Herald*, and *Semana*, a Colombian newsweekly, also ran stories. In March, Joy Olson appeared on the Andres Oppenheimer Show in a televised discussion on drug policy.
- ▷ **Cuba** Action Day received widespread press coverage by radio, television, and local and national newspapers. The Miami Herald ran an article on the event, reporting: "Some 600 activists from Miami to Alaska rallied in Washington Wednesday to show support for congressional moves to ease restrictions on travel to Cuba." NPR, Univisión, Telemundo, Seattle Times, Sun Sentinel, and the Washington Times, among others, reported on the event.
- ▷ Laurie Freeman participated in a radio interview on WNYC's Leonard Lopate Show, to discuss the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua, **Mexico** on their weekly feature program, "Underreported." Laurie Freeman also contributed to articles about the murders in the Dallas Morning News, the New York Times, *La Jornada*, and the Los Angeles Times. She spoke to the frustration of many in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua when she told the LA Times, "the bottom line is that once again the authorities are asking the victims' families to wait for answers, and they have been waiting too long."
- ▷ When Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced that the United States would lift its 15-year ban on military aid to **Guatemala**, WOLA responded immediately in the press. The New York Times, Inter Press Service Agency, the Air Force Times, Pacifica News Radio, and others quoted Adriana Beltrán criticizing the move as sending the wrong message to a government that has done little to stop murderous clandestine groups.



Women from the Sexán community in El Estor, Izabal in Guatemala with whom Adriana Beltrán met to discuss their struggle against mining companies operating in the area.

Cuba Action Day

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members of ECDET, the Emergency Coalition to Defend Educational Travel.

Agricultural exporters and farm groups, which are now selling \$400 to \$500 million a year to Cuba, under an exemption to the trade embargo approved in 2000, also participated in Cuba Action Day, hoping to see easier access to the island for their sales representatives, and anticipating that increased U.S. travel to the island would increase Cuban demand for U.S. goods.

Just before Cuba Action Day, Representatives Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and William Delahunt (D-MA) introduced legislation to end the travel ban. As of this writing, sixty-three other Members had co-sponsored the Flake-Delahunt legislation. Although support for this measure is bipartisan, the opposition of the Republican leadership means that the bill is unlikely to come to the House floor for a vote. Instead, as in previous years, the House is expected to vote in late June or early July on an amendment that would de-fund enforcement of the ban on travel to Cuba. The Senate will likely consider a similar amendment later in the summer.

Reps. Flake and Delahunt, along with Rep. JoAnn Emerson (R-MO) spoke to the Cuba Action Day attendees at the forum. Earlier, Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) had welcomed participants, and briefed them on the congressional landscape.

During the course of the day, Cuba Action Day participants visited over 60 Congressional offices. In addition, there were special briefings for congressional staff on the impact of travel



restrictions on cultural exchange and Cuban-American families.

It is likely that congressional majorities will once again support an end to the ban on travel to Cuba. As in prior years, the question is whether Members of Congress will be able to keep the language in the final bill that goes to the President's desk, or whether the Republican leadership and Cuban-American hardliners will succeed once again in removing the language in last-minute, backroom maneuvering. Whatever happens this year in Congress, Cuba Action Day demonstrated that people are angry about the Administration's new restrictions on travel. Americans and especially Cuban-Americans are hurt by these restrictions and are speaking out in Washington and in their communities. 🇺🇸

Youth Gang Violence

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emphasis on prevention programs, and for a policing strategy that is more respectful of human rights and due process.

WOLA seeks to support and amplify these voices, in Central America and in the international community. The February conference brought speakers from Central America to a U.S. audience that ranged from policymakers to community activists. WOLA

has had subsequent discussions with State Department officials, Congressional offices, and others about the concerns and criticisms raised at the conference. Over the next year, we will continue to raise these issues here in Washington. Furthermore, working with partners in the region, we will increase awareness about the need for investment in the social side of responding to youth gangs. 🇺🇸

Bolivia Narrowly Averts Bloodshed but Not Out of the Woods Yet

By Jeff Vogt

La Paz, and the rest of the country, is slowly returning to normal—relatively speaking. For weeks, protestors from various social movements had sealed off the capital city with roadblocks and demonstrated throughout the country. They sought to force the government to nationalize Bolivia's oil and gas reserves and to convene a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution that would further incorporate the indigenous population into the political process. From another sector, representatives from the resource rich and comparatively wealthy region of Santa Cruz demanded greater regional autonomy from the central government, and with it greater control of national resources, a demand unacceptable to the tens of thousands

resources in many cases did not improve quality or access to these services, and in some cases, such as water, resulted in diminished access at higher prices.

Unable to resolve the conflicting demands between the various factions, the President tendered his resignation on June 6 during a televised speech to the nation. The Congress, unable to convene in La Paz, convened a special session on June 9 in Sucre to determine whether to accept the President's resignation, and if so, who would lead the bitterly divided country. Fearing bloodshed or even civil war should Senate leader Hormando Vaca Diez, a controversial lawyer and businessman from Santa Cruz, or House president Mario Cossio assume leadership

To understand the demands of the social movements is to realize that they arise in the context of the historic political and economic marginalization of the majority indigenous and impoverished population.

massed in the streets. The Congress failed to approve either demand for a constitutional assembly or referendum on greater regional autonomy. In an effort to resolve the spiraling crisis, President Carlos Mesa passed decrees to enact both measures. Mesa's decrees were too little, too late.

To understand the demands of the social movements is to realize that they arise in the context of the historic political and economic marginalization of the majority indigenous and impoverished population. Additionally, the results of economic reforms undertaken in the mid-80s, on the advice of international financial institutions, brought few, if any, of the promised benefits to the general population. Indeed, the majority experienced cuts in vital public services, as austerity programs limited public investment. The too rapid liberalization of the economy is also often cited as having contributed to job losses and growing income inequality in the country. The privatization of public services and

under constitutional rules of succession, Mesa publicly urged both men to step aside in order to allow the third person in the line of constitutional succession, Supreme Court president Eduardo Rodriguez, to assume the presidency and call constitutionally mandated elections. Fortunately, this is exactly what happened. Mr. Rodriguez, seen as politically untainted, assumed the presidency June 9. Some opposition leaders, including Evo Morales, called a truce and have agreed to give the interim president the opportunity to steer the country towards new elections.

Although the recent transition of government has quelled the demonstrations, it has only postponed the inevitable resolution of the conflict. The next president will certainly face the same task of mediating the irreconcilable demands of the political and social elite centered in Santa Cruz, various foreign investors, and the impoverished majority that are demanding more power after centuries of political and economic marginalization. 🇨🇧

New Publications

▷ **Drogas y Democracia en América Latina: El impacto de la política de Estados Unidos**, edited by Coletta A. Youngers and Eileen Rosin, 2005, \$20. The Spanish language edition of WOLA's comprehensive review of U.S. drug-control policies toward the region and assessment of impacts on democracy and human rights. Includes eight detailed case studies. The result of a three-year research project, the book is the first systematic, region-wide documentation and analysis of the collateral damage caused by the U.S. war on drugs. Available from Editorial Biblos, www.editorialbiblos.com, ventas@editorialbiblos.com, tel: 011-5411-4361-0522.

▷ **Informe Especial de WOLA, Drogas y Democracia en América Latina: El impacto de la política de Estados Unidos, Resumen Ejecutivo**, by Coletta A. Youngers and Eileen Rosin, June 2005, 20 pp., \$3.00. The Spanish translation of the executive summary of WOLA's

pathbreaking new book on the collateral damage caused by the U.S. war against drugs in Latin America.

▷ **Manual para la facilitación de procesos de capacitación para la incidencia política**, co-published by WOLA and the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), 294 pp. The manual provides conceptual and methodological tools to individuals and organizations that seek to strengthen and assist advocacy initiatives through training, planning, and evaluation. The manual is also available in English. It is available on WOLA's website, www.wola.org.

▷ **Construyendo una estrategia de medios para la incidencia política**, 294 pp. As an integral part of any advocacy campaign, the manual offers individuals and organizations conceptual and practical tools for planning effective media advocacy strategies. It is available on WOLA's website, www.wola.org.

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