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OPEN LETTER:

TO THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY,

'FARC-POLITICA'¹: A new WITCH-HUNT against the Political Opposition in Colombia

As at no other time in the life of the nation, the loss of credibility of public institutions now has a direct correlation with the mafia style of governance.

Para-politics is the crime of bribery that favoured Uribe's re-election; it is the links between government officials, the district attorney office and State security with the cartels of the paramilitary mafia; the failed "process" of demobilization of the paramilitaries and the strange extradition of paramilitary bosses closing off the possibility of knowing the truth demanded by their victims; the repeated attempts of the government to undermine the autonomy and the independence of the justice system particularly, the Supreme Court of Justice; the politicization of the office of the Attorney General in favour of the government; the military incursions outside the national territory and the unfortunate diplomatic handling of matters with the progressive governments of the region. These are just some elements that provide evidence of the lack of governability in the country and call into question the existence of real democracy.

Neither the Colombian people, nor for the international community find it strange that the Colombian government resorts to manoeuvres and smoke screens every time it confronts a new scandal providing evidence of its illegality and illegitimacy.

On this occasion the Uribe government, in a rehash of the darkest days of state terrorism, has unleashed another "witch-hunt" against the political opposition. Last May 22, in a public address to the press the Attorney General of the country, Mario Iguarán, and the Defence Minister, Juan Manuel Santos, announced the beginning of the process that has been called "farc-politica"; a judicial process derived from emails supposedly found on the computer of the late leader of the FARC, Raul Reyes, after the military incursion into Ecuadorean territory last 1st of March 08.

After which, they proceeded to read a list of the persons presumed to be implicated in the supposed emails. They were all leaders of the national and international opposition: members of congress, academics, journalists and other well-known personalities.

On the 8th August, it was published in the mass media that an investigation was opened with an order for my capture, as one of those mentioned on the list of the "farc-politica". A few hours later, my place of residence was raided and I was taken away under "preventative" arrest. I was then taken to the facilities of the Anti-terrorism Unit of DIJIN (judicial police) and six days later, jailed at the Women's Prison in Bogotá.

¹ NB: Farc-Politica, a process known as Farc-politics

During the raid conducted by the DIJIN on my home, a number of irregularities took place which today I would like to publicly denounce:

- My young children (5 and 15 years old) were filmed without authorization.
- My 15 year old son was verbally abused and intimidated. On many occasion during the raid he was queried, and I quote, “are you going to follow in your mothers foot steps?”
- The illegal seizure of personal items and documents belonging to my mother and children (bank statements, passports and laptop) that had no connection to the proceedings against me.
- The manipulated filming and later the leaking to the press of documents and books freely available for public sale that were presented in the media as subversive propaganda.
- The aberrant seizure of public documents like the constitution of the Communist Youth, other documents referring to the Communist Party, a book with the title “Bolivar for Children”, etc and even the absurd action of taking a school assignment belonging to my son, who is in year 9, that deals with the Colombian conflict.

It warrants attention as to how, the images taken during the raid were so “efficiently” distributed to be widely published by the media even before the raid had finished, while the captain of the DIJIN told me that “they would make me nationally and internationally famous.”

While unaware of the details of the judicial process initiated by the Anti-terrorist Unit against me, which is also an illegal practice that violates due process and the presumption of innocence while under investigation is lost, the state intelligence and the juridical authorities in charge also systematically leaked to the media – in particular to the EL TIEMPO newspaper – some of the supposed emails and defamatory statements against me, such as the supposed intimate relationship with the assassinated leader of the FARC, Raul Reyes. I denounce and reject this irresponsible and clearly ill-intentioned defamation that has been presented publicly against me, violating my dignity, my honour and my right to privacy as a woman and as a mother, as a professional and an activist of the left. I do this also because it is part of the government's insidious strategy to damage the image of revolutionary organizations and their leaders.

I would also like to denounce publicly how violating the Penal Code penalises my fundamental rights as the head of my family and those of my children. The Attorney 19 of the Anti-terrorist Special Unit, **Nancy Esperanza Pardo Bonilla** has denied my right to home detention. A decision we reject and with my defence team we are appealing against it.

I also publicly denounce and express my profound concern at the surveillance that my 15 years old son has become victim of since my detention.

I hold the government and its security forces directly responsible for any actions that harm the physical and moral integrity of my family or mine.

I request the solidarity of all progressive and human rights organizations and ask them to take the necessary measures for the protection of my family.

It is very clear that the so-called process of FARC POLITICA is more an act of political persecution than a legal case and that it is full of illegalities. With my defence team we have decided:

1. Not to recognize the supposed emails found in the computer of the late leader of FARC Raul Reyes as evidence against me because, these emails were obtained from an illegal military action on 1st March organized outside the national territory and violating Ecuadorean territorial sovereignty since this action had no authorization from either the Ecuadorean government or police or the judicial authorities of that country.

2. To reject the emails as valid evidence against me, not only because they were obtained after an illegitimate act of war in which civilians and guerrillas who were in the camp of Raul Reyes were murdered as it was recognized by the Organization of American States (OAS) but also because a cloud of doubt exists over their veracity and the manipulation they were subjected to.
3. Publicly denounce the Office of the Attorney General for starting the process of accusations against many leaders of the opposition and national and international personalities based only on the supposed emails illegally obtained that lack validity as evidence.
4. Publicly denounce Judge 60 of the Bogotá Control of Guarantees for validating the illegally obtained evidence.
5. Denounce the report of the Judicial Police for ideological falsehood, expressing the facts that took place on 1st March 2008 in a misleading way from the computers presumably obtained and that are now used with the intention of accusing us.
6. To turn to international organisations due to the lack of credibility and legitimacy enjoyed by those responsible for justice in Colombia.

Before the national and international anti-terrorist crusade the Colombian government had already begun organizing against the political opposition. It is not indifference or fear that immobilizes and gags or a weak attitude or lack of solidarity that will keep us safe. It is not by denying the political fighters or revolutionary organizations or the struggle of the people that will lead us out of the 'dark night'.

Only unity in action, mobilization, solidarity and adherence to revolutionary principles allows us to confront the difficult moments and advance towards the construction of a real democracy, and political inclusion and the long yearned for Peace with Social Justice.

Finally, I would like to thank all the expressions of solidarity made by national and international, trade unions, social, political and human rights organizations as well as all those committed to social justice.

I thank those that have recognised my work as an academic and social activist in the defence of human rights in pursuit of peace with social justice for our country.

Here we carry on with high morale in this new battle because the imprisonment of our bodies does not mean the renunciation of our ideals or our principles which remain free.

Fraternally,

Liliany Obando
Political Prisoner
Prisoner of conscience
Communist activist
Survivor of the genocide against the Union Patriótica