

## COLOMBIA

### Attorney General admits that national police killed student activist

[note: Although RRN did not write on behalf of this particular victim, RRN has written several letters protesting brutal attacks by the ESMAD riot squad on legal demonstrations by civilians. Hopefully the admitting of this murder by the Colombian government will curb abuses by the ESMAD riot squad.]

#### **Good news: January 22, 2010**

**The Colombian Attorney General's Office announced that ESMAD (National Police Anti-Disturbance Mobile Squad) was responsible for the death of Johnny Silva Aranguren on September 22, 2005.** Silva, a 21-year-old student at the University of Valle in Cali, was a participant in a demonstration against a free trade agreement with the United States. ESMAD agents attacked the demonstration with tear gas and live ammunition. Other participants were able to run, but Silva was unable due to a congenital defect. He was shot in the neck. Demonstrators took him to a hospital, where he died soon after.

Cali Police Commander Jesús Antonio Gómez Méndez declared that the police had not entered the campus and that Silva had not been shot by police officers. However, video evidence showed otherwise. When the evidence was produced to show that Gómez had lied, the response of President Uribe was to announce that there is nowhere in Colombia that the police and military are not allowed to go.

So far no penalties have been assessed against any of the officers involved in this assault. There is a more than 95% rate of impunity for military and paramilitary political assassinations. We can only hope that this will be an exception to the rule, and justice will be served.