

SEPTEMBER 3, 2002

**SCHAKOWSKY RESPONDS TO ABSURD COLUMN BY MARY ANASTASIA O'GRADY  
OF *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL***

**COLUMN ATTACKS CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS  
TO END HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN COLOMBIA**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In response to Mary Anastasia O'Grady's 8/23/02 "*absurd*" column in *The Wall Street Journal* attacking members of Congress for working to end human rights abuses in Colombia, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) wrote, "*The Colombian government has the absolute right to wage war against the brutal FARC guerrillas. My colleagues and I insist, however, that Colombia must wage this war while upholding the law.*"

Schakowsky added,

*"O'Grady used tired tactics and sloppy reporting to brand people who defend human rights as enemy sympathizers."*

□ O'Grady referenced a letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell that was spearheaded by Schakowsky and signed by a bipartisan coalition of House members. □ In the July 23, 2002 letter to Powel, the members demanded that the Bush Administration enforce US law by ensuring that the Colombian government end human rights abuses.

Below is Schakowsky's full response to *The Wall Street Journal*.

□

August 30, 2002

Letters to the Editor  
*The Wall Street Journal*

Dear Editor:

Mary Anastasia O'Grady used tired tactics and sloppy reporting to brand people who defend human rights as enemy sympathizers in the absurd August 23rd op ed, "*Capitol Hill Leftists Side with Colombia Terrorists.*" □

I was particularly troubled by the quote from Colombia's Attorney General, Luis Camilo Osorio, in which he attributes the human rights criticisms of the Colombian military,

which have been repeated time and time again in reports by the US State Department, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as "a war to discredit the authorities,... an international movement not only by NGOs but by some European states, Sweden, Norway, France in the past and some groups in the U.S., including some Democratic congressmen."

I would like to remind Mr. Osorio that many of the forty-five signers of the letter have been emphatic supporters of US aid to his own institution, to the Attorney General's human rights office and the judicial system in general. It just shows that funding does no good where there is a lack of political will.

As Colombia's highest-ranking law enforcement official, Mr. Osorio has the duty to take seriously credible allegations of human rights abuses and collusion with abusive paramilitary forces by members of the Colombian Armed Forces. Instead of fulfilling those obligations, he has removed experienced prosecutors from sensitive cases, forced the resignation of other dedicated judicial personnel (including the two mentioned in the article), and imagined a conspiracy behind those who remind him to just do his job.

I stand by the assertions in the letter regarding the records of Generals Rodrigo Quiñones and Rito Alejo del Río. No "low-level investigator" found that Quiñones was guilty of ordering the murders of at least 57 people; it was the Office of Special Investigations of Colombia's Inspector General. Quiñones appealed the decision; the case lapsed after frightened investigators let a time limit pass without a decision. The case against Del Río includes solid evidence, some from the general's own subordinates, tying him to support for illegal paramilitary groups. President Pastrana dismissed General Del Río and the United States government canceled his visa. O'Grady gave a sloppy account of the events that led to the general's arrest and release. The release resulted from a judge's controversial ruling that human rights prosecutors cannot investigate generals, a ruling that helps to ensure that human rights crimes go unpunished.□

The Colombian government has the absolute right to wage war against the brutal FARC guerrillas. I agree with Ms. O'Grady's account of the atrocious recent actions by the FARC. My colleagues and I insist, however, that Colombia must wage this war while upholding the law.

That means that the Colombian security forces must stop resorting to dirty war tactics like aiding and abetting or tolerating the paramilitary forces that commit the majority of the killings of civilians in Colombia today. Ties between members of the Colombian military and the paramilitaries are extensively documented. What we demand is simple: that those ties be broken.

As to the spelling error, thanks for the correction. And by the way, Ms. O'Grady, the geographic area you refer to is spelled Urabá, not Uruba.

**Sincerely,**

**Jan Schakowsky**  
**Member of Congress**