



## Press Release

William, John Jairo and Javier (aged 5, 8 and 9) died in Colombia on February 13<sup>th</sup> last in the Department of Meta, due to the explosion of an antipersonnel mine. All of us share in the emotion, the pain and the revolt aroused by such acts.

Landmines, all landmines, whoever has placed them, must be cleared and destroyed, and their use firmly condemned. This is an imperative humanitarian necessity.

In Colombia, there must never again be innocent little victims such as William, John Jairo or Javier. Each time an antipersonnel mine can be deactivated is a victory over inhumanity. Everything must be done to achieve this; no possibility must be neglected or rejected, and each mine destroyed now may avoid a disaster tomorrow.

It is in this spirit that Geneva Call is reiterating its request that a specialised mine-clearance organisation may be authorised by the government to come and check a zone in Micohumado that was cleared of landmines by the ELN guerrilla last month. This is a humanitarian act that must be abstracted from the context of political discussions and tensions. This is an urgent matter, since children's lives may depend upon it.

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By way of reminder: Colombia is a country that is littered with landmines. Between January and September 2004, there have been 421 casualties from landmines. Among them 192 civilians and 109 people have been killed. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year to February 1<sup>st</sup>, 29 victims of whom 5 civilians.

Geneva Call has been active for two years in Colombia and is attempting to convince armed groups to abandon the use of antipersonnel mines, or at the very least to begin by acting in such a way as to diminish their impact on the civilian population. The mine-clearance of Micohumado is one such example.

Nonetheless, Geneva Call must also insist on the fact that landmines are indiscriminate weapons and that the ultimate goal must remain to achieve a total ban.

Geneva, February 21<sup>st</sup> 2005

Elisabeth Reusse-Decrey, President  
Mehmet Balci, Director of the Programme for Colombia