

# Canadian organizations call for unequivocal commitment to peace and respect for human rights in Colombia

September 20, 2019

On the eve of the International Day of Peace, the undersigned Canadian organizations are joining to express their profound concern over an escalating human rights crisis in Colombia and continued threats to the Colombian peace process.

In 2016, a historic peace agreement was reached between the Government of Colombia and the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC), with great hope of bringing an end to 52 years of armed conflict. Less than one month ago, the peace process was dealt a serious blow when several former commanders and now dissidents of the demobilized FARC announced their return to arms. They cited a lack of compliance by the Colombian state with the peace agreement and the systematic killing of social leaders and demobilized FARC members.

By all accounts, President Duque and his political party have systematically undermined the peace agreement. They have consistently underfunded several of its key components; openly attacked the transitional justice system, and moved slowly on reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. Disturbingly, they have promoted and enacted legislation that is in direct opposition to the agreement, in particular with respect to the provisions related to agrarian reform and rural development – issues that gave rise to the armed conflict and that are vital to a sustained peace. Prodded by the United States administration, the Duque government has also abandoned the agreements related to crop substitution. All of these measures have had a disproportionate impact on rural women, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations.

We are deeply concerned that little or no action has been taken to constrain paramilitary death squads that continue to threaten and kill community leaders with impunity. Since the peace agreement was signed in December 2016, at least 700 social movement leaders and 142 demobilized insurgents have been murdered<sup>1</sup>. During the same period, an additional 260,000 Colombians were forcibly displaced<sup>2</sup>, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Colombia to approximately 7.8 million – the highest number of IDPs in the world<sup>3</sup>. In June of this year the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial Executions, Agnes

---

<sup>1</sup> [INDEPAZ, Informe Especial: Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos en tiempos de Paz, p. 13.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Gobierno de Colombia, Unidad para la atención y reparación integral a las víctimas. Cifras: Desplazamiento - Personas.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018, p. 6.](#)

Callamard, called on the Colombian government to “cease inciting violence” against demobilized FARC members<sup>4</sup>.

As Canadian organizations, we reiterate our solidarity with the people of Colombia and their desire to build a country where peace and justice prevail, and where deeply entrenched political, economic and social inequalities are addressed. We share their conviction that the peace agreement is an important step in this process and that it must be vigorously defended.

We call on the Government of Canada to use its close relationship with Colombia to:

- Speak out forcefully to condemn the killings and the dangerous backsliding on implementation of the peace agreement.
- Press the Colombian government to uphold its obligations to protect the lives and rights of social leaders, human rights defenders and demobilized insurgents.
- Press the Colombian government to comply with its obligations under the peace agreement and to advance without further delay on its full implementation.
- Insist on the resumption of the negotiation table between the National Government and the ELN guerrilla, understanding that the only way out of the conflict is through dialogue.

We urge the Government of Canada to redouble its political and economic support for peacebuilding initiatives in Colombia and ensure that Canadian trade and investment interests in Colombia are in no way undermining the peace process.

1. Americas Policy Group / Groupe d'orientation politique des Amériques
2. Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale
3. Avocats sans frontières Canada
4. Basilian Centre for Peace and Justice
5. British Columbia Teachers' Federation
6. British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union
7. Canadian Association of University Teachers
8. Canadian Jesuits International
9. Canadian Labour Congress / Congrès du travail du Canada
10. Canadian Peace Congress
11. Canadian Union of Postal Workers
12. Canadian Union of Public Employees
13. Centre international de solidarité ouvrière
14. Centre Oblat – A Voice for Justice

---

<sup>4</sup> [OHCHR, Colombia: UN experts condemn attacks on reintegrated former combatants, urge respect for peace process.](#)

15. Christian Peacemaker Teams - Canada
16. Christian Peacemaker Teams - Colombia
17. Centrale des syndicats du Québec
18. CoDevelopment Canada
19. Colombia Action Solidarity Alliance
20. Colombia Working Group
21. Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine
22. Common Frontiers
23. Defendamos la Paz internacional
24. Development and Peace - Caritas Canada
25. Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec
26. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada
27. Fondation Salvador Allende Montréal
28. HOLA Latino Group
29. Horizons of Friendship
30. Inter Pares
31. Justice, paix et intégrité de la création
32. KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
33. Latin American & Caribbean Solidarity Network
34. Mennonite Central Committee Canada
35. MiningWatch Canada
36. National Union of Public and General Employees
37. Nobel Women's Initiative
38. NORDIK institute – Algoma University
39. Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
40. Oxfam Canada
41. Oxfam-Québec
42. Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie
43. Public Service Alliance of Canada / Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada
44. Teamsters Canada
45. The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada
46. United Steelworkers / Syndicat des Métallos
47. Unifor