

International day of Peace

Making peace a reality to transform Colombia

Brussels, 21 September 2017.

On 30 November last year, peace agreements between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP) were officially endorsed, thus ending four years of intense negotiation and opening up new horizons after more than 50 years of armed confrontation.

The FARC is now a political party, the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force (*Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*), and its thousands of members have laid down their weapons and are being reintegrated into civilian life. The implementation of the peace agreements is progressing with the creation of several institutions as foreseen in the agreements, in particular those focused on the dismantling of paramilitarism. Likewise, civil society have been involved and participated in a number of aspects of the process as agreed.

However, although the peace agreements have been accompanied by a reduction in the total number of homicides in the country, **since the first version of the agreement was signed in September 2016, until June 2017, 82 human rights defenders have been killed** according to Colombian NGO the We are Defenders Program (*Programa Somos Defensores*). In the first six months of 2017, 51 defenders were killed, representing an increase of more than 45% when compared with the same period in 2016.

The persistence of violence and threats against human rights defenders shows that the signing of the agreements is not enough to eradicate socio-political violence in the country. Added to this are ongoing delays in the implementation of the agreements due to the uncertain electoral scenario that Colombia will face in a few months time, which jeopardises their effective implementation.

These and other challenges related to the implementation of the peace agreements, as well as the state of negotiations between the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army (ELN), will be discussed at the ODHACO Assembly on 10 October, and during the subsequent European speaking tour of representatives from the main Colombian human rights coordination groups.

For ODHACO, it is fundamental that the European Union, its member countries, Switzerland and Norway strongly support the implementation of the peace agreements in Colombia so that they are stable and long-lasting. We call upon these countries to redouble their accompaniment efforts so that the agreements are implemented as soon as possible, and to follow-up in detail on adherence to the spirit of the agreements, with a particular focus on the victims and on the resolution of the economic and socio-political conflicts that have persisted during decades of war.

On the International Day of Peace, **OIDHACO sends greetings to representatives from the Colombia-United States-Europe Coordination Group (*Coordinación Colombia-Europa-Estados Unidos*) and the Colombian Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development (*Plataforma Colombiana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo*)** who will visit Europe in October to discuss the challenges of peace and explain how Europe can contribute to stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

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