

BRIEFING

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From Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos (CCEEU) & Corporación Sisma Mujer

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- ❖ **Transitional justice:** How the rights of women and victims, especially of sexual violence, have been advanced, particularly before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP).
- ❖ **National Action Plan 1325:** Progress on the development of the Plan and governance structures for its implementation, to include the participation of CSOs.
- ❖ **Total Peace:** Current status of the Peace Talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN); civil society participation in the talks: and how to ensure the gains for women in the 2016 Peace Accord are not lost in the pursuit of Total Peace.
- ❖ **Police reform:** The need for a civilian police force with a gender perspective.
- ❖ **Protection of Civic Space:** Importance of the meaningful participation of civil society under the Petro administration, and the protection of human rights defenders.

Lilibeth Cortés Mora is a lawyer specialised in criminal law, who works on women's rights and the incorporation of a gendered approach, especially for victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. She is currently the Deputy Director of Transitional Justice in the Corporación Sisma Mujer.

Corporación Sisma Mujer is a Colombian feminist organisation that has contributed to the consolidation of the women's movement since 1998. It works with women victims of violence and discrimination in the context of the private and public spheres, and the armed conflict, for the expansion of their citizenship, the full enjoyment of their human rights and the promotion of their transformative roles.

Mildrey Corrales Charry has been a human rights defender in Colombia for over 30 years, supporting civil society organisations in their efforts to address Colombia's internal armed conflict, including through coalition-building, policy development, raising awareness about human rights violations, and seeking dialogue within various sectors of civil society, as well as with the State.

The **Coordinación Colombia Europa Estados Unidos (CCEEU)**, of which she is a member, is a network of 290 social organisations and human rights defenders, from 25 of the 32 departments of Colombia, created in 1995. It is dedicated to strengthening the human rights movement; analysing the human rights situation from an integral perspective, with an emphasis on civil and political rights; and, advocacy before local and national governmental bodies, as well as before relevant international human rights bodies.

What is Colombia's 'Total Peace'?

Despite the 2016 Peace Accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) ("the Accord"), there are still as many as 26 armed groups active in Colombia. Total Peace is an ambitious, multifaceted effort that seeks to minimise violence and protect civilians by fully implementing the commitments made in the Accord and dismantling the many remaining illegal and criminal armed groups in Colombia. It is based on the concept that human security results from guaranteeing the right to life, advancing Colombians' socio-economic well-being, and protecting the natural environment. Further to this, the Petro Government is currently engaged in political dialogues with the National Liberation Army (ELN), Segunda Marquetelia and the Estado Mayor Central (EMC) and is seeking to engage with other high-impact criminal armed groups, such as the AGC.

A coordinated approach to ensuring an integrated implementation of the Peace Accord is also required under the Petro Government, particularly given that the lack of implementation during the four years of the Duque Government led to a resurgence of the conflict. While one of President Petro's declared objectives

is to fully implement the Accord, the announcement in March 2023 of the establishment of an office in the Presidency dedicated to furthering this has not yet been followed up.

A Gendered Approach to ‘Total Peace’

The tireless work of Colombian women’s organisations with successive Colombian Governments, has resulted in the current Petro Administration agreeing to develop a National Action Plan (NAP 1325) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

The Government together with 16 Women’s Organisations and UN Women organised consultations across the country at the local (especially in rural areas), regional and national levels, and with specific groups. The aim of the process has been to offer ideas and recommendations to guide the formulation of NAP 1325, and related activities, based on a participatory approach and the recognition of the knowledge, experiences, and work carried out by women’s organisations in the territories, in light of their diverse identities. The more than 1,000 women involved from all over the country included Indigenous, black, Afro-descendant, palaqueras, raizales, mestizo, peasant, LGBTI, peace signatories, activists, disabled, urban and academic, all of whom worked to guarantee that NAP 1325 has a territorial, age, and intersectional focus, recognising contributions of women’s organisations to peace and their role as key agents for the consolidation of ‘Total Peace’.

It is now important to ensure governance structures are being developed to oversee the implementation of NAP 1325. It is essential that these structures incorporate civil society actors at all levels, reflecting the approach taken with the consultations.

Risks to Human Rights Defenders and Rural Communities in Colombia

Colombia was the deadliest country in the world for human rights defenders in 2022, accounting for 186 killings – or 46% – of the global total registered last year, according to the latest report from the international human rights group Front Line Defenders.¹ This trend has continued into 2023 with 188 human rights defenders killed according to INDEPAZ. The rural areas in Colombia have seen an increase in violence and illegal armed groups fighting one another for control of territory and illicit economies. According to INDEPAZ there were 93 massacres in 2023.²

In relation to women defenders, in 2023 a participatory process was developed for the new four-year Action Plan (2023-2026) for the Integral Program of Guarantees for Women, Women Leaders and Defenders (PIGMLD), which must integrate peace-building efforts and a robust individual security policy, with a feminist approach.

The Role of the UK

The UK has an important role on the UN Security Council as Penholder for the Mission of Verification in Colombia. It took a leading role in expanding the mandate of the Verification Mission to include, along with the monitoring of the implementation of the Accord and of the ceasefire with the ELN under the Total Peace Policy.

¹ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2022>

² INDEPAZ, <https://indepaz.org.co/informe-de-masacres-en-colombia-durante-el-2020-2021/>

The UK Government and its Embassies should engage with the Colombian State on the following:

- Urge the Colombian State to promptly establish an office in the Presidency for full and integrated implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord, as promised.
- Promote a structural reform of the National Police, promoting changes in the police model, the hierarchical structure and the strict distinction between military and police functions.
- Urge the Colombian State to monitor the use of force and lethal weapons, in order to establish a policy that promotes dialogue and the effective transformation of social conflicts. This reform should include gender, ethnic and territorial approaches and include broad participation of civil society organisations and victims of police violence.
- Request that cases of police abuse be investigated and punished in a diligent and impartial manner, without resorting to military criminal jurisdiction, urging the Prosecutor General's Office to assume and advance the investigations.
- Urge the Colombian State to accept the recommendations of the United Nations Committee Against Torture, especially regarding the use of force and implementing comprehensive support measures for victims in the context of protests, aimed at securing truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition of such aggressions. Such comprehensive support measures should include legal, medical, psychosocial, ethnic, gender and LGBTI approaches for victims of police violence and their families, in addition to guarantees for access to fundamental rights such as education, work and housing.
- Urge the State to promote the approval of the statutory law that guarantees the right to protest in Colombia, as dictated by the Supreme Court and in accordance with international standards on the matter.
- Urge the State to include a clear agreement related to the non-involvement of civil society in the conflict during negotiations with all armed groups, in particular the guarantee for the exercise of the defence of human rights by women defenders and social leaders.
- Urge the State to safeguard the participatory approach of the PIGMLD and accelerate its implementation process in the remaining time of the presidential mandate.
- Urge the State to reinforce the protection of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities, as they are among the populations most victimised by armed groups.
- Urge the State to respect and guarantee forms of collective protection in the framework of Decree 660.
- Urge the State to effectively prevent the recruitment of children in armed groups.
- Urge the State to implement urgent comprehensive measures to mitigate the crisis faced by social leaders and defenders, which has been widely denounced, recognising the particular risks faced by women.
- Engage with the Colombian State on taking actions against the growing socio-political gender-based violence faced by women leaders and defenders, including: the forced recruitment of their sons and daughters by illegal armed groups; the risk of sexual violence; the weakening of the protection of women's social, community or political organisations; and, persecution, displacement or assassination as a result of territorial control strategies in areas affected by the armed conflict. All of these issues affect women's leadership work, violate their rights to defend human rights and to live a life free of discrimination and violence.

The UK Government and its Embassies can better protect Colombian defenders and CSOs by:

- Continuing to advocate for the participation of Colombian CSOs and grassroots organisations in the development and implementation of the Colombian National Action Plan 1325.
- Ensuring Colombia is also prioritised in the implementation of the UK National Action Plan 1325.
- Continuing to support, including through their Embassy, CSOs and human rights defenders, especially from the grassroots, with, for instance, funding and protective accompaniment.