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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

THE SITUATION IN COLOMBIA

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Introduction: Nearly One Hundred Years of Violence¹

The constancy of armed violence in Colombia comprises its undeniable contemporary tragedy. Ravaged by seventy years of civil war (1948-2018) and internal armed conflicts, Colombia's violence and its spillover effects, including internal displacement, refugees, contentious relations with neighboring countries such as Ecuador and Venezuela, and drug trafficking, create critical security issues for the Americas and throughout the world. As the various actors in this seemingly interminable series of conflicts interact and revise their strategies, they impose considerable burdens on Colombian civil society and neighboring countries. The Security Council and the broader international community need to focus on ending the violence in Colombia, promoting effective disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) of former combatants, and implementing inclusive and sustainable development initiatives, using the 2016 Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace², approved by the Colombian Congress, as the primary framework.

Scale of the Problem

Colombia is currently ranked as the 71st most fragile country in the world by the Fund for Peace, a vast improvement from its 2006 ranking of 27.³ This improvement is laudable, but concerns about the inclusivity and sustainability of Colombian society, particularly amidst the uncertainty generated by targeted killings of *guerrilla* leaders⁴ turned politicians⁵ and the election of right-wing legislator Iván Duque (Márquez) as the new president⁶, confront

¹ Many of the subheadings in this background guide are derived from the works of Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garcia Márquez, including: *The Autumn of the Patriarch*; *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*; *The General in His Labyrinth*; *In Evil Hour*; *Love in the Time of Cholera*; *No One Writes to the Colonel*; and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

² The text of the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace may be found at: <http://especiales.presidencia.gov.co/Documents/20170620-dejacion-armas/acuerdos/acuerdo-final-ingles.pdf>

³ Fund for Peace, "Fragile States Index 2018", 2018. Found at: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/data/>. Data for the years 2006-2018 may be accessed directly at the aforementioned site.

⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace", Latin America Report No. 63, October 19, 2017, p. 5.

⁵ *Associated Press*, "Colombian Rebels-Turned-Politicians Sworn into Congress", July 20, 2018.

⁶ Emma Bowman, "Colombia Elects Right-Wing Populist Ivan Duque as President", June 18, 2018.

Colombians and the broader international community. The internal conflicts between former, and sometimes current, *guerrillas*, particularly from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), conservative and right-wing landowners and the paramilitaries they created, often in at least tacit cooperation with the Colombian military, and the Colombian government are all playing out at the same time that Colombia and the international community are concerned about the prospective unraveling of neighboring Venezuela⁷; recent reports of violence against Venezuela migrants and refugees heighten the tensions and stakes throughout the region.⁸ Prospects for lasting peace may also finally permit Colombia's 6.5 million+ internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 300,000+ refugees⁹ to return to their communities, if not always their original homes.

The Final Agreement delineates 6 primary items to ensure a lasting peace and sustained inclusive economic and human development: 1) comprehensive rural reform; 2) political participation for former FARC-EP *guerrillas*; 3) end to the armed conflict; 4) addressing the problems presented by illicit drug cultivation, production, and trafficking; 5) providing justice and compensation to the victims of the armed conflict; and 6) implementation and verification mechanisms to ensure that peace is preserved. The Colombian government and the FARC bear the greatest responsibilities for effective implementation of the Final Agreement but the United Nations (UN) is specifically tasked with the receipt of the FARC-EP's weapons as well as assisting in the selection of Magistrates for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), the judicial body that "will fulfill the duty of the Colombian state to investigate, prosecute and sanction crimes committed in the context of and due to the armed conflict, and in particular, the most serious and representative."¹⁰

La Violencia

Colombia's critical geographic location, situated at the northern tip of South America, directly linking North and South America, with both Atlantic/Caribbean and Pacific coasts, provides today's 50 million Colombians with great opportunities and confronts them with tremendous challenges. Beginning with its independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century, Colombia formed heart of Simon Bolívar's *Nueva Granada/Gran Colombia*, a country that included Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela until 1830; Panamá would remain part of Colombia until 1903 when US President Theodore Roosevelt assisted Panamanian rebels in exchange for exclusive rights to complete and operate the eventual Panama Canal.

Throughout Colombia's first 130 years of independence, the dominant Conservative and Liberal political parties contested elections, argued fiercely over the role of the Catholic Church in education and society, and engaged in armed conflict, including multiple civil wars. In 1948, after the murder of leading Liberal Party candidate for president, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, "in towns up and down the rest of country [after immediate violence in Bogotá] radical Liberals and

⁷ José R. Cárdenas, "The Ghost of Hugo Chávez is Haunting Colombia's Election", *Foreign Policy*, June 16, 2018.

⁸ Manuela Andreoni, "Residents of Brazil Border Town Attack Camps for Venezuelan Migrants", *New York Times*, August 19, 2018.

⁹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), "Colombia", 2018. Found at: <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia>

¹⁰ *Presidencia de la República de Colombia*, "Summary of Colombia's Agreement to End Conflict and Build Peace", 2016, p. 30.

militants from smaller left parties lashed out at the symbols of Conservative rule and Catholic authority. The net result was a dramatic escalation in the scope of violence, as Conservative police and paramilitary forces meted out revenge against what they more and more saw as godless, upstart Liberals.”¹¹

Colombia was torn apart by horrific violence as the country, and particularly the rural communities, bore witness to an internal version of Cold War rivalries and antagonisms. The Conservative Party leadership sought to emulate Spain’s Fascist leader, Francisco Franco, while the Liberal Party, and a small domestic Communist Party, resisted Conservative control. After the Liberal Party boycotted the 1950 presidential elections in protest against the concerted wave of violence unleashed in the wake of Gaitán’s murder, the Conservative Party used the security forces to create *pájaros* (birds in Spanish), who intimidated and eliminated political opposition in many areas; these *pájaros* are widely considered to comprise the forerunners of later paramilitary and “auto-defense” militias. The Liberals retaliated in kind and the by the early 1950s *La Violencia* and its consequences dominated Colombian politics and society. Journalist and human rights monitor Robin Kirk noted that “...the struggle that rapidly consumed Colombia, was personal. Grand political fortunes were at stake, but so too were simmering land disputes, municipal rivalries, indiscretions, ambitions and affairs of the heart...”¹²

As *La Violencia* and its aftermath engulfed more Colombian communities, it exacerbated the persistent social and economic inequalities that have always plagued Colombia. When peasants were fled increasing violence, wealthy landowners and their political allies used the peasants’ forced exodus to expand their own landholdings. Inequality deepened, seemingly reinforced by violence perpetrated by the official security forces as well as their unofficial allies. Rural peasants and other internally displaced persons (IDPs), whether forcibly relocated or who fled in advance of the rapidly encroaching violence, eventually settled in and/or created communities from which arose the most organized and fiercest resistance to *La Violencia*.

Enter *Las Guerrillas*

By 1960, the effects of *La Violencia* were felt throughout Colombia, particularly in rural areas. The Liberal Party fractured further, with some of the marginalized members, such as Pedro Marín, later known as Manuel Marulanda Velez or *Tirofijo* (Sureshot), joining forces with the Communists. Within a few years, conflicts between the security forces and a rapidly expanding cadre of *guerrilla* groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP), the Popular Liberation Army (ELP), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the April 19 Movement (M-19), radically reshaped Colombia’s political and physical landscapes. After surviving large-scale military operations, these various rebel groups began posing a serious challenge to the integrity and sovereignty of the Colombian government.

In the early 1960s, the FARC-EP and other rebel groups carved out several “independent republics” in the poor, rural southern provinces of Colombia. Bogotá’s traditional neglect of

¹¹ Robert A. Karl, *Forgotten Peace: Reform Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2017, p. 25.

¹² Robin Kirk, *More Terrible Than Death: Violence, Drugs, and America’s War in Colombia*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2004, p. 25.

these rural provinces, combined with the horrors of *La Violencia*, provided openings for the *guerrillas* to begin exercising varying degrees of sovereignty in these “independent republics.” The Colombian government’s alliance with the United States further alarmed and antagonized these *guerrillas* during the heightened tensions of the Cold War. Starting with US President Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress, the Colombian government partially reoriented its approach to resolving these tensions through the introduction of *Plan Lazo*, a combination of relief and military efforts aimed at reintegrating the autonomous “republics” into Colombia while simultaneously eliminating the *guerrillas*. *Plan Lazo* did not eliminate the “independent republics”, in part because, as Marín, or *Tirofijo*, argued that “...if the government had spent even a fraction of the money it used equipping soldiers to help needy farmers and build roads and schools, it might well have avoided decades of trouble with the FARC.”¹³

Later Colombian governments, including the successive administrations of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998) and Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002), unofficially, but effectively, recognized FARC-EP control over a significant area of southern Colombia in attempts to reduce the horrific violence plaguing Colombia and to induce the *guerrillas* to negotiate. As these attempts at negotiation failed to produce sustainable, positive results, the presidency of Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010), augmented by the military’s informal alliances with paramilitaries, or “self-defense” groups, and bolstered by critical US military assistance through *Plan Colombia*, would see a ratcheting back up of government force to eliminate the FARC-EP, ELN and other *guerrillas*.

“Self-Defense” Groups That Go on the Offense

The intricate relationships between the Colombian military and the paramilitary organizations, or “self-defense” groups, have comprised critical linkages for the economic, military and political elites in Colombia for decades. The infamous *pájaros* of *La Violencia* would eventually be superseded by the well-organized and better financed “self-defense” groups that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly the United Self-Defense Forces (AUC). The influential paramilitary leader of the AUC, Carlos Castaño, claimed that his armed paramilitaries, eventually totaling approximately 32,000 fighters, developed organically in response to the violence and Marxist ideology of the *guerrillas*. In reality, though, “the paramilitaries were never a homogenous organization but rather a marriage of interests between powerful local warlords, drug barons, organized crime, members of local political and economic elites and counter-insurgent groups.”¹⁴

Paramilitary groups in Colombia constituted the infamous “Sixth Division” of the Colombian armed forces because of their extremely close partnerships. The Colombian military routinely shared intelligence feeds and information with the paramilitaries; unfortunately, this was not surprising given that many paramilitary commanders and fighters were previously members of the Colombian military and police. In a chilling echo of the atrocities then unfolding in the Darfur region of western Sudan (2003-2010)¹⁵, investigators and journalists documented

¹³ Robin Kirk, *More Terrible Than Death*, 2004, p. 53.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), “Colombia’s New Armed Groups”, May 10, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁵ The worst of the atrocities in Darfur largely occurred between 2003-2010 but the United Nations and the African Union (AU) have maintained a hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur since 2007. On July 13, 2018, the Security Council unanimously approved resolution 2429 (S/RES/2429) extending UNAMID’s mandate through June 30,

attacks where the Colombian military initiated the actions and then left the area to allow the paramilitaries to harass, rape, and murder both *guerrillas* and civilians that the paramilitaries suspected of assisting and harboring *guerrillas*, without any official oversight or obstruction.¹⁶

The Colombian government, after years of denying any coordination or cooperation with the paramilitaries, save for a few right-wing legislators, began curbing some of the excesses of the paramilitaries, particularly after serious allegations surfaced about then President Uribe and some of his family members and allies collaborating with the paramilitaries. In the 1990s, Álvaro Uribe, as governor of Antioquia province, praised the *Convivirs*, self-defense groups that were then nominally legal but were often suspected of involvement in massacres in rural areas. When accusations of directing massacres surfaced against President Uribe's brother Santiago, cited evidence included "letters and statements by AUC members, military officers, prominent politicians, drug kingpins, and powerful landowners going back to the 1980s..."¹⁷ In 2006, the AUC announced that it was voluntarily demobilizing and disarming in return for amnesty from crimes committed over the previous decade. While the announced demilitarization and demobilization of the AUC was cautiously applauded as a positive step towards peace, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations, along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society representatives, identified a "third generation of paramilitaries," including the New Generation Organization (ONG) in Nariño and the Black Eagles in Norte de Santander.¹⁸ In 2018, the most dangerous paramilitary organization is known as the Gaitanistas; founded in Antioquia in 2006, "the group claims that it was 'obliged' to take up arms given the 'poorly done peace process', in reference to the paramilitary demobilisation slightly more than ten years ago, and argues that it defends its territory from the ELN."¹⁹

Colombia and Terrorism

Western media accounts of terrorism primarily focus on the Middle East and the Muslim world, but Colombia has frequently been cited as an important front for terrorism by the United States and other governments. The FARC-EP and the AUC have both been labeled terrorist organizations by the US State Department, and the tactics used by *guerrillas*, the paramilitaries, and Colombian security forces have frequently targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, including power stations and oil pipelines. The FARC-EP maintained important links to the Irish Republican Army (IRA) throughout the 1990s and the Basque nationalist group *Euzkadi ta Aksaluna* (ETA), considered a terrorist group by Spain and rumored to have trained in FARC-EP-controlled areas.²⁰ Throughout the 1990s, massacres and reprisal massacres targeted peasants and anyone suspected of collaborating with the enemy. While the overall level of violence in Colombia is significantly below the levels of the previous two decades, attacks against civilians

2019, while also reducing the force structure by nearly 50%. UN Security Council resolution 2429 (S/RES/2429), "Reports of the Secretary-General on Sudan and South Sudan", July 13, 2018.

¹⁶ Bill Weinberg, "Colombia's Heart of Darkness in NYC – and DC", *The Nation*, July 29, 2008.

¹⁷ Marla McFarland Sanchez-Moreno, *There Are No Dead Here: A Story of Murder and Denial in Colombia*, Nation Books, New York, 2018, pp. 152-153.

¹⁸ ICG, "Colombia's New Armed Groups", May 10, 2007, p. 2.

¹⁹ ICG, "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace", October 19, 2017, p. 9.

²⁰ *BBC*, "Colombia 'used for terrorist training'", April 24, 2002.

and civilian infrastructure continue, including the FARC-EP assassination of 3 teachers they suspected of being informants for the military.²¹

The Reach of Drug Money

Colombia remains the world's largest producer of cocaine as well as a significant producer of heroin and marijuana, with the sales of illegal drugs amounting to an estimated tens of billions of dollars annually. Drug money is so embedded in Colombian society that it is nearly impossible for local and national politicians to declare that their campaigns have not been financed, at least partially, by drug sales and/or trafficking. The *guerrillas* and the paramilitaries are also so heavily invested in the drug trade that some of the worst atrocities committed by each side have been perpetrated primarily to capture better coca-growing land. As always, Colombian civilians remain trapped in the middle.

Combating the cultivation, production and trafficking of Colombian cocaine, and to a lesser degree, heroin and marijuana, has been a priority for successive Colombian and American governments, regardless of political party, but the overall success of the "war on drugs" has been rather limited; the estimates for 2017 from the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and the White House total a record 921 metric tons of cocaine.²² Previous efforts at spraying herbicides and eradication of coca plants have temporarily reduced coca production; unfortunately, though, these efforts have also damaged food crops and produced serious environmental consequences.²³ Colombian farmers will also need assistance in shifting production away from coca; currently, 30,000 families are receiving benefits from Colombia's Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution, approximately 25% of the families that have signed collective agreements with the government.²⁴ The International Crisis Group (ICG) further argues that "poor coordination between forced eradication and substitution efforts has led to conflicts between state forces, who claim to be eradicating industrial-size crops not eligible for substitution programs, and communities claiming the crops belong to small-scale growers who have expressed an interest in taking part in crop substitution."²⁵ Accelerating initiatives like the Comprehensive Program for Illicit Crop Substitution and related efforts by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) may be vital components to inclusive and sustainable solutions to ending Colombia's civil war and drug-related criminal activities and violence.

Accompanying the massive expansion of the drug industry and its tremendous profitability was the development of drugs-related violence and narcoterrorism. The violent rivalry between the Cali and Medellin cartels and the notorious bombing campaigns against Colombian politicians and judges promoting extradition to the United States, most notably linked with Medellin's Pablo Escobar, roiled Colombia for years. Escobar alone "bombed a passenger plane, as well as Colombia's federal police headquarters, and paid bounties for the murders of policemen and members of rival drug gangs. Estimates are difficult, but it is thought he was

²¹ Simon Romero, "Cocaine Sustains War in Rural Colombia", *New York Times*, July 27, 2008.

²² Christine Armario, "US report: Colombia coca production surges to record high", *Associated Press*, June 26, 2018.

²³ *The Economist*, "The unstoppable crop", June 19, 2008.

²⁴ Christopher Woody, "Colombia is trying to root out the cocaine trade, but farmers are relying on it as an 'insurance policy'", *Business Insider*, March 22, 2018.

²⁵ ICG, "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace", October 19, 2017, p. 23.

responsible for more than 4,000 deaths.”²⁶ The Colombian government eventually stopped extraditing drug traffickers to the US and the bombings ceased. Under President Uribe, though, extradition would resume, although as a Colombian Senator, after his presidency, Uribe would join with then President Juan Manuel Santos and many influential Colombians in arguing that the 1979 extradition treaty with the US had been invalidated by the Colombian Constitutional Court in 1980.²⁷ Questions about extradition efforts remain vital legal, political, and security issues in Colombia today; during the 2018 presidential campaign, Uribe’s mentee and eventual winner, Duque, called for the extradition of *guerrilla* leader and indicted drug trafficker Seuxis Hernandez.²⁸

News of Thousands of Kidnappings

As conflict in Colombia escalated, various *guerrillas* explored new options for financing their operations, including “war taxes” levied on economic activities within the “independent republics,” including narcotics cultivation, production, and trafficking, and kidnapping wealthy Colombians, including children, and foreigners for ransom. The M-19 *guerrillas* proved that ransoming wealthy hostages served as a lucrative source of income in the mid-1970s; by the 1980s, the FARC-EP and the ELN became involved, too, and Colombia would become known as the global kidnapping capital.²⁹ Kidnappings raised the costs of doing business in Colombia for foreign corporations, including Occidental Petroleum and *Chiquita*, previously the United Fruit Company, and raised millions of dollars for the *guerrillas*. Kidnappings, particularly of Colombian citizens, including the journalist Diana Turbay, alienated large swaths of Colombian society; eventually, wealthy landowners, domestic and foreign corporations, and their allies, including paramilitaries, responded forcefully. *Chiquita* confessed to paying at least \$1.6 million USD to the AUC to protect its executives, management, and workers and to funneling thousands of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) to the AUC. After protracted negotiations, *Chiquita* eventually paid a fine of \$25 million to the US Department of Justice and sold off its Colombian branch.³⁰

Regional Concerns

Colombia’s security concerns are not strictly internal and require feasible, inclusive, and sustainable international solutions. Ecuador, Panamá, and Venezuela are the countries most immediately affected by Colombia’s violence and instability, but the effects are felt throughout the Americas and beyond.

The Colombian government infuriated Ecuador in March 2008 by initiating hostilities against *guerrillas* on Ecuadorean soil; the OAS ruled that the attack violated Ecuador’s

²⁶ Mike Ceasar, “At Home on Pablo Escobar’s ranch”, *BBC*, June 2, 2008.

²⁷ Adrian Alsema, “What do you mean Colombia’s extradition treaty with the US was never legal?” *Colombia Reports*, December 22, 2016.

²⁸ Ciara Nugent, “How a Former Guerrilla Leader’s US Extradition Threatens Colombia’s Fragile Peace”, *Time*, May 25, 2018.

²⁹ In 2000, 3,572 kidnappings were reported in Colombia; in recent years, the annual totals hover around 300. Kyra Gurney, “Behind Colombia’s Dramatic Fall in Kidnappings”, *Insight Crime*, January 13, 2015.

³⁰ *Telesur*, “New ‘Chiquita Papers’ Expose How Banana Execs Fueled War and Terror in Colombia for Decades”, April 25, 2017.

sovereignty. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Ecuador severed diplomatic ties with Colombia; at the beginning of June 2008³¹, Ecuador and Colombia restored low-level diplomatic ties before Uribe's successor, Juan Manuel Santos, and Ecuador's then president, Rafael Correa, initiated the full restoration of diplomatic relations in November 2010.³² Restoration of diplomatic relations led to a more concerted effort to prevent FARC-EP incursions along the Ecuadorean-Colombian border. Ecuador announced a "zero tolerance" policy against the FARC-EP, with Ecuadorean security forces initiating actions against individuals suspected to collaborating with the FARC-EP.³³

The at least implicit support for the *guerrillas* operating along Colombia's borders is essential to the FARC-EP's resilience. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has denounced Colombia's government as planning a "massacre" of FARC-EP leaders, even after the signing of the 2016 peace agreement.³⁴ Previous Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez distanced himself from the FARC-EP after a laptop was recovered detailing links between Chavez's government and the FARC-EP.³⁵ Just as he was reluctantly leaving power, and just a few months before his former Defense Minister, and then President, Santos restored diplomatic relations with Ecuador, Uribe confronted Chavez³⁶, leading to a temporary break in relations that Santos and Chavez, with assistance from Correa, would then restore.

The UN System and the OAS in Colombia

Decades of violence in Colombia disrupted regional development and security initiatives, leading to greater involvement by the international community, including the UN System and the Organization of American States (OAS). In February 2004, the OAS established the OAS Peace Support Mission in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) "with a mandate to verify initiatives to bring about a ceasefire and end of hostilities, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration into society of the illegal armed groups that operate in Colombia."³⁷ The United States government praised the OAS's performance in this Peace Support Mission (MAPP/OAE)³⁸, but Human Rights Watch (HRW) and other nongovernment organizations (NGOs) have criticized the OAS Mission³⁹. In recent years, aid for MAPP/OAE has expanded from OAS member states to include, among others, Germany, which increased its annual contribution following the extension of MAPP/OAE operations through 2018; recently, the OAS extended MAPP/OAE's mandate through the end of

³¹ *BBC*, "Colombia and Ecuador restore ties", June 6, 2008.

³² Ross Sylvestri, "Ecuador's security and Colombia's 50-year old conflict", *Southern Pulse*, September 3, 2014.

³³ Ross Sylvestri, "Ecuador's security and Colombia's 50-year old conflict", September 3, 2014.

³⁴ Adrian Alsema, "Colombia is a failed state and planning FARC massacre", *Colombia Reports*, April 21, 2017.

³⁵ Juan Foreroc, "Chavez, Seeking Colombia Role, Distances Himself from Rebels", *Washington Post*, July 8, 2008.

³⁶ Rory Carroll, "Chávez and Uribe 'almost came to blows' at summit, says WikiLeaks", *Guardian*, December 2, 2010.

³⁷ "Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the General Secretariat of the OAS for Monitoring of the Peace Process in Colombia," signed January 23, 2004, by the Secretary-General of the OAS, César Gaviria, and President Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

³⁸ Eric Green, US Department of State, "Report Reviews US-Backed Peace Mission in Colombia: US official says peace process in Colombia making progress", September 8, 2006. Found at: <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2006/September/200609081217011xeneerg0.7633478.html>

³⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Colombia: Sweden and Netherlands Should Withdraw Support for OAS Mission", June 23, 2005. Found at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/06/23/colomb11214.htm>

2021.⁴⁰ German Ambassador Von Goetze noted that “it is very obvious that the peace process needs support and the OAS has proven that it can give this support with the full consent of the government but also those on the ground and that peace can only be achieved if justice is guaranteed at the same time.”⁴¹

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) continues to investigate a variety of issues within Colombia, including: extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions; arbitrary detention and the prison system; the situation of human rights defenders in Colombia; and the impacts on civilians, including journalists and trade unionists. The UN’s human rights presence in Colombia dates back to 1996 when the Office in Colombia of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) began monitoring the human rights situation in Colombia and working with the Colombian government as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to implement the recommendations of the Office’s annual reports.⁴² The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also works extensively in Colombia and throughout the region to assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Colombian refugees in Ecuador.

With agreement from both the Colombian government and the FARC-EP, as they neared the conclusion of negotiations of the 2016 Final Agreement, the UN System deployed the UN Mission in Colombia (UNMC) to verify demobilization efforts. After concluding its mandate in September 2017, the UN Mission in Colombia (UNMC) transitioned to the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC). The UN Verification Mission in Colombia continues to oversee demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) efforts in Colombia, including the Territorial Development Plans (PDETs) that are characterized as “the key tool for planning and managing a broad rural development process that aims to transform the 170 municipalities (covering 16 subregions) most affected by the armed conflict. As such, the PDETs will have most impact in municipalities with high rates of forced displacement and land dispossession, killings, massacres, and forced disappearances, above average rates of extreme poverty and inequality, the strongest presence of illicit crops, and the lowest levels of institutional performance at local level.”⁴³

Land mines

Colombia’s landscape is still littered with thousands of anti-personnel land mines, with an estimated 2,300 people killed and almost 9,000 more injured by land mines during the last

⁴⁰ Organization of American States (OAS), “*El Espectador: Misión de paz de OEA en Colombia amplía hasta 2021*”, 2018. Found at: <https://www.mapp-oea.org/el-espectador-mision-de-paz-de-oea-en-colombia-se-amplia-hasta-2021/>

⁴¹ Organization of American States (OAS), “Germany Announces Contribution to the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia”, February 24, 2015.

⁴² The most recent report is from January 2015. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), “Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Report of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Colombia”, A/HRC/28/3/Add.3, January 23, 2015.

⁴³ Mariana Escobar Arango, “Territorially Focused Development Plans can transform the countryside and strengthen peace in Colombia”, The London School of Economics and Political Science, October 10, 2017. Found at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/latamcaribbean/2017/10/10/territorially-focused-development-plans-can-transform-the-countryside-and-strengthen-peace-in-colombia/>

decade.⁴⁴ Colombia is a state party to the Ottawa Treaty banning the use of land mines but the military's close connections to right-wing paramilitaries that refuse disclose whether they deploy land mines impedes the government's efforts to completely disassociate itself from the use of land mines. The FARC-EP admitted to deploying land mines in Colombia but none of the other *guerrilla* groups admit to using land mines. As a result of the 2016 peace deal, the Colombian government and former FARC-EP *guerrillas* are working to clear all land mines from Colombia by 2021. Foreign governments, including Norway and the United States, have donated over \$100 million USD to assist in mine clearance efforts.⁴⁵

Plan Colombia to Plan Victoria

As a result of increased US government focus on violence and drug trafficking in Colombia in the 1990s, successive US presidential administrations from Clinton to Trump and their respective Congresses have provided over \$10 billion USD in drug eradication and military assistance to Colombia over the past 17 years. Known as Plan Colombia, this continuing package of primarily military assistance was influential in bolstering Uribe's and Santos's more assertive policies towards the FARC-EP, and, to a lesser extent, the paramilitaries. US and Colombian officials often assert that the Colombian government's more forceful policies towards the *guerrillas* and other armed groups, made possible by Plan Colombia, also contributed to significant economic growth and improved peace prospects.⁴⁶ In the aftermath of the 2016 Final Agreement, the Colombian government has focused on implementing its Plan Victoria (Victory Plan), which "involves sending 65,000 soldiers and 15,000 police officers to 160 priority municipalities."⁴⁷ These municipalities are quite often the communities prioritized in the Territorial Development Plans (PDETs), critical environments for which the inclusive and sustainable peace and economic and human development that Colombians yearn.

Autumn of the Patriarch: Uribe's Fall from Grace?

Then President Álvaro Uribe's government (2002-2010) believed that the FARC-EP was more vulnerable than in previous years, particularly with the deaths of experienced commanders such as Raul Reyes and Marín. With expanded communications and military capabilities as a result of Plan Colombia, Colombian security forces disrupted FARC-EP communications and coordination of military operations. Millions of Colombians demonstrated, demanding an end of kidnappings and violence, with the most visible expressions of anger directed towards the *guerrillas*. Further erosion of their decreasing popular support concerned the FARC.

President Uribe's confidence was tempered, however, at the beginning of July 2008 when Colombian soldiers rescued 15 hostages, including 2002 presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and 3 US Department of Defense contractors. While initial media reports showered praise on the Colombian government and military, the government was later forced to admit that one of its

⁴⁴ Jason Beaubien, "Bombs in Baby Food Jars Are Just One of Colombia's Land Mine Problems", *National Public Radio (NPR)*, November 12, 2017.

⁴⁵ Anastasia Moloney, "Colombia aims to rid country of landmines by 2021: govt", *Reuters*, February 14, 2017.

⁴⁶ José R. Cardenas, "Plan Colombia Shouldn't Be the Price of Peace with the FARC", *Foreign Policy*, February 1, 2016.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace", Latin America Report No. 63, October 19, 2017, p. 18.

soldiers wore the insignia of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on his uniform; according to many international lawyers and scholars, this may have constituted a war crime⁴⁸.

Uribe frequently proclaimed his great successes against the FARC-EP and other *guerrillas*, both as president and subsequently as senator, but the signing of a peace deal with the FARC occurred under President Santos, Uribe's then Defense Minister. Furthermore, during Uribe's presidency, over 60 of his political allies in Congress, including his cousin Mario, were arrested and/or imprisoned over their close connections to the paramilitaries.⁴⁹ Uribe's brother Santiago would also face serious accusations and in July 2018, then Senator Uribe resigned from Congress amidst a bribery investigation.⁵⁰

Following a failed attempt to persuade the Colombian Constitutional Court to run for a third term as president⁵¹, Uribe was succeeded by his Defense Minister, Juan Manuel Santos, on August 7, 2010. Within two years, Santos announced a significant departure from Uribe's policies. Santos called for pursuing peace talks with the FARC-EP while simultaneously continuing military operations. By May 2013, both sides announced that several of the most contentious issues had been resolved, marking the first time that the Colombian government and FARC-EP had reached substantive agreements in over 30 years of off-and-on negotiations.⁵² Over the next two years, Santos's government and the FARC-EP agreed on permitting demobilized FARC-EP leaders to participate in Colombian politics and to reduce drug trafficking; the FARC-EP further announced that it would cease recruiting minors to serve as fighters.⁵³

Peace in Colombia: An Achievable Goal?

Achieving peace in Colombia may be more feasible than at many points over the past 70 years but lasting animosities and grievances must be addressed. While tensions remain palpable, particularly during the most recent presidential and legislative election campaigns, the overwhelming majority of Colombians, including the vast majority of the FARC-EP and other *guerrillas*, wish to end these fratricidal conflicts and instead focus on inclusive and sustainable economic and human development initiatives. Demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) of former *guerrillas*, paramilitaries, and child soldiers must be accomplished in a timely and comprehensive manner. At the same time, though, the pace of economic development and the distribution of the benefits of the promised peace dividend must accelerate or "many will be tempted to join the remaining FARC[-EP] dissidents, the ELN or the EPL unless ex-fighters can look forward to an alternative livelihood."⁵⁴ The Colombian

⁴⁸ *France 24*, "Red Cross Slams Colombia for cross misuse", August 8, 2008.

⁴⁹ Jeremy McDermott, "Colombia confronts its bloody past", *BBC*, August 2, 2008.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Casey, "Facing Investigation, Ex-President Uribe Resigns from Senate in Colombia", *New York Times*, July 24, 2018.

⁵¹ Patrick Markey, "Colombia's Uribe blocked from re-election", *Reuters*, February 26, 2010.

⁵² *Aljazeera*, "Deal reached on land reform in Colombia", May 27, 2013.

⁵³ Anastasia Moloney, "Ex-child soldiers in Colombia face their tormentors", *Christian Science Monitor*, February 23, 2015.

⁵⁴ ICG, "Colombia's Armed Groups Battle for the Spoils of Peace", October 18, 2017, p. 21.

government, the UN System, and interested domestic and international partners may wish to pursue renewed negotiations with the ELN in Havana, Cuba⁵⁵ or another mutually agreeable site.

Furthermore, victims and their relatives will be closely following the work of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, with its inauguration for its 3-year mandate on November 29, 2018⁵⁶, hoping for news about their loved ones, an abiding sense of remorse on the parts of the victimizers, and an inclusive, sustainable, and just peace for all Colombians. Security Council delegates may wish to examine the proceedings of the peace and reconciliation commissions in countries such as Chile, Guatemala, and South Africa as potential examples for Colombia's own process of revealing and healing. The efforts of the Comprehensive System must be augmented by profound reforms of the Colombian justice system and security forces through a thorough inculcation of respect for the human rights of all Colombians.

Clearing Colombia of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) is a critical step towards creating a stable and viable environment for inclusive and sustainable economic, human, and social development and the UN System and the international community need to increase their contributions and assistance towards landmine clearance in Colombia. Landmine clearance will serve as just one more vital step towards assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to returning to their communities.

Guiding Questions:

How does the security situation in Colombia affect your country? How does the regional situation, including the ongoing turmoil in Venezuela, affect the prospects for an inclusive and sustained peace in Colombia?

How might the UN System, the OAS, and the international community most effectively assist Colombia in securing and maintaining this inclusive and sustainable peace?

How might the international community, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, bolster extant initiatives providing assistance and relief to Colombian IDPs and refugees?

How effectively have the various armed groups demobilized and disarmed? How effectively have these former combatants been rehabilitated and reintegrated into Colombian society? What can the UN System do to improve and expand this process of demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration (DDRR) of former combatants?

What steps can the UN System and the international community undertake to support the efforts of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)?

⁵⁵ Nicholas Casey, "Waging War from a Hotel Basement: Colombian Rebels Offer Hostages and Ask for Talks", *New York Times*, August 24, 2018.

⁵⁶ António Guterres, "Report of the Secretary-General: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia", S/2018/1159, December 26, 2018, p. 3.

How might the UN System, including the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and related agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), accelerate the implementation of Development Programmes with a Territorial-Based Approach (PDET)?

Security Council resolutions:

United Nations Security Council resolution 2435 (S/RES/2435), “Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)” September 13, 2018.

United Nations Security Council resolution 2381 (S/RES/2381), “Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)”, October 5, 2017.

United Nations Security Council resolution 2377 (S/RES/2377), “Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)”, September 20, 2017.

United Nations Security Council resolution 2366 (S/RES/2366), “Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)”, July 10, 2017.

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Reports of the Secretary-General:

António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia”, S/2018/1159, December 26, 2018.

António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia”, S/2018/874, September 28, 2018.

António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia”, S/2018/723, July 20, 2018.

António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General: United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia”, S/2018/279, April 2, 2018.

António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia”, S/2017/1117, December 27, 2017.

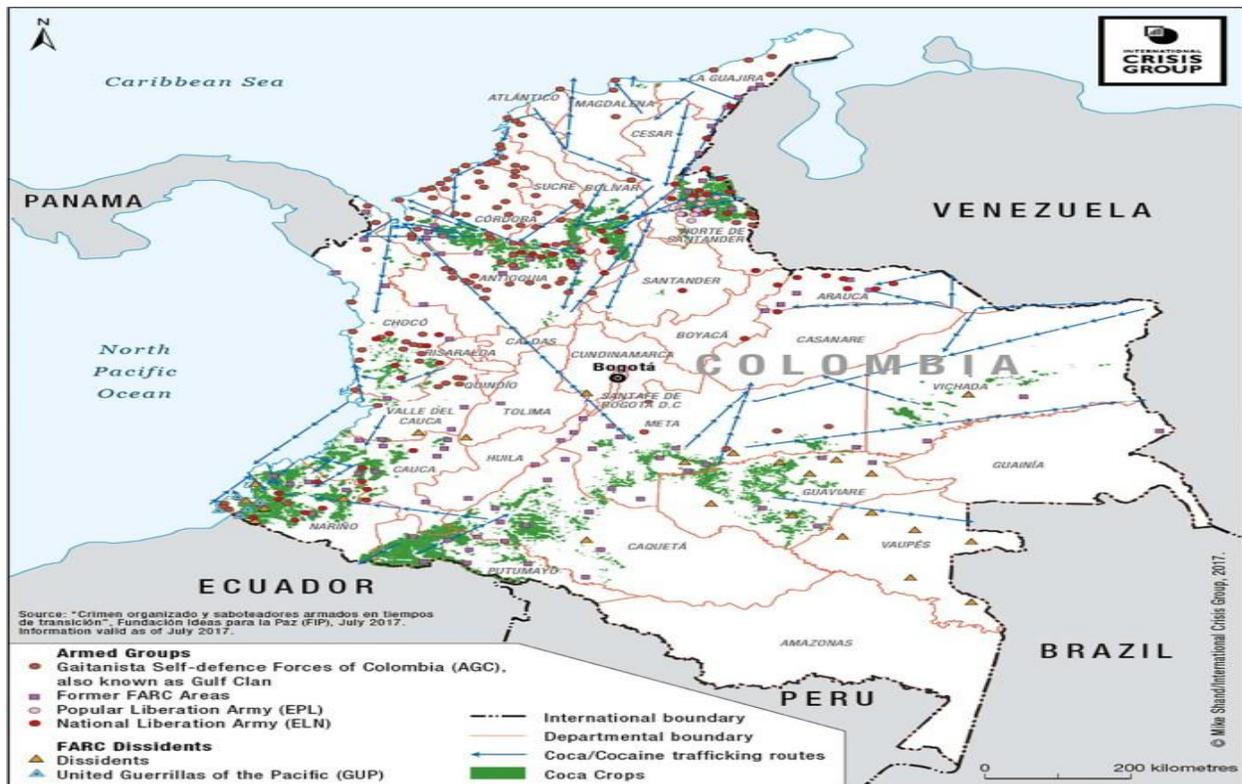
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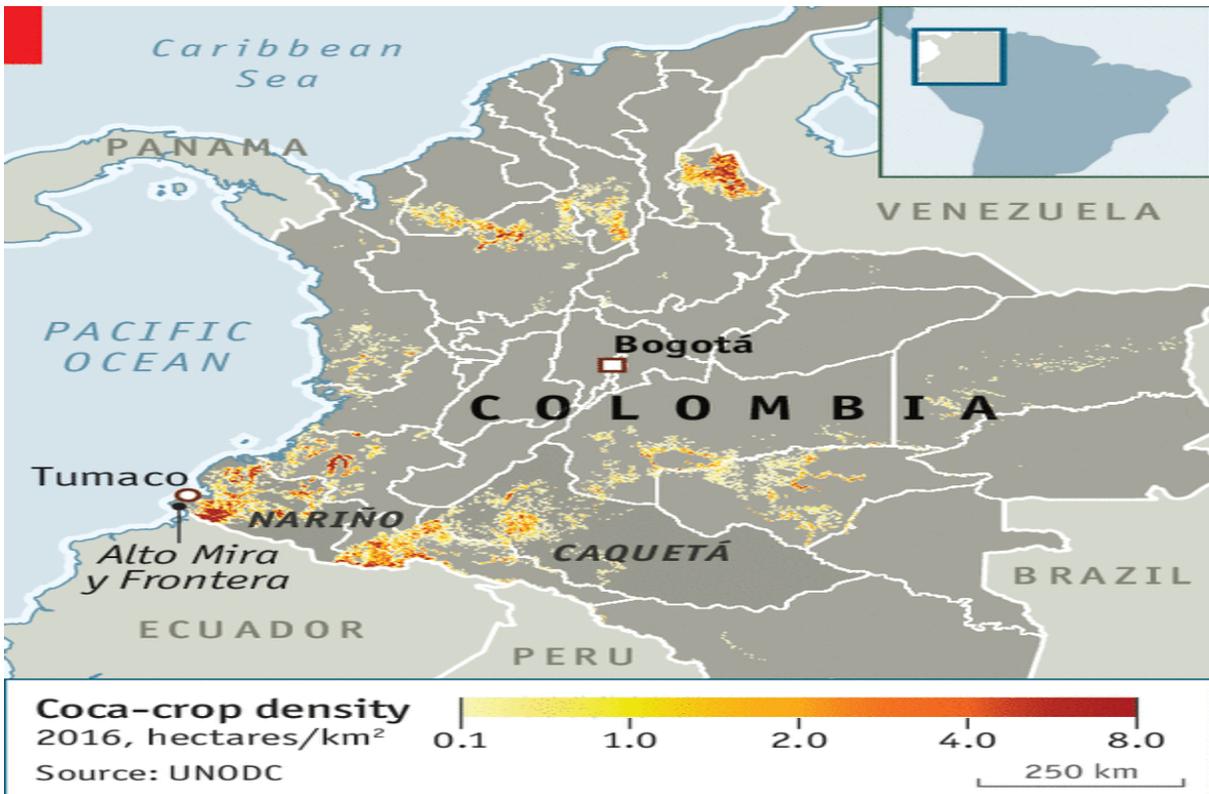
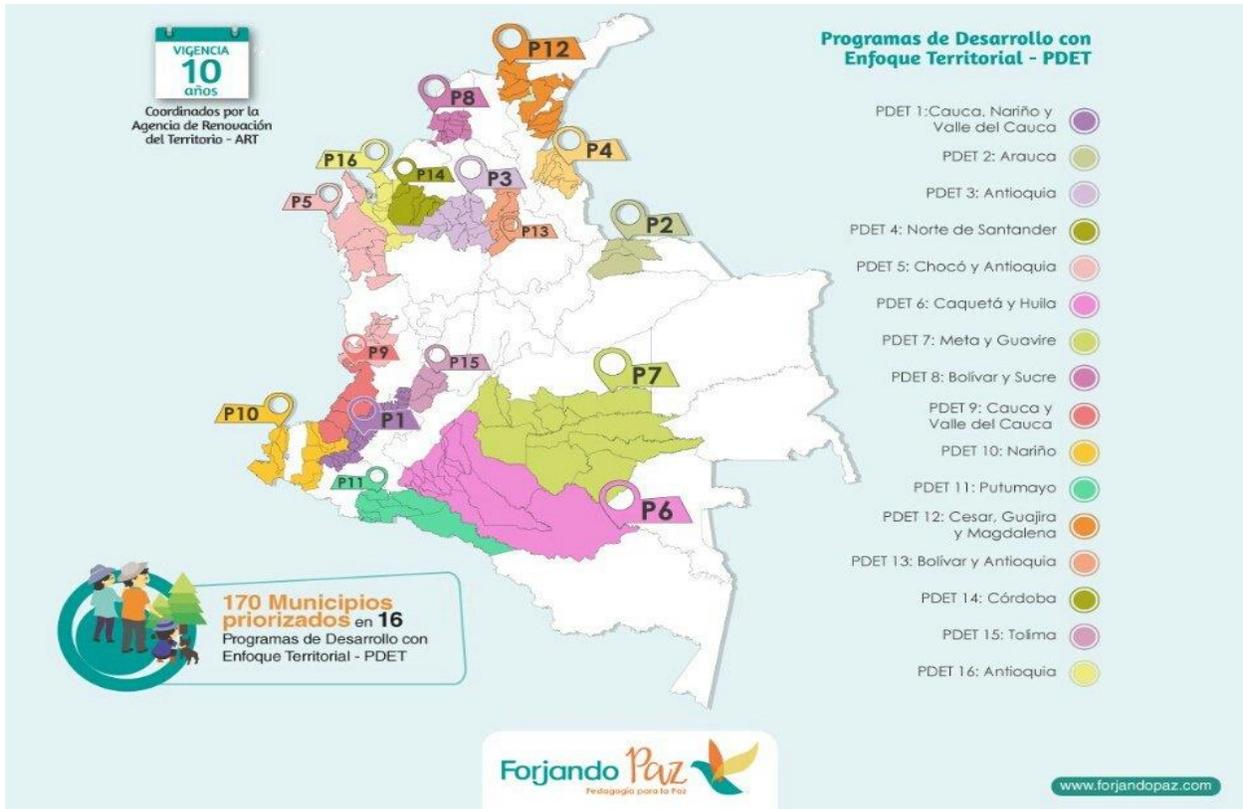
António Guterres, “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia”, S/2017/539, June 23, 2017.

Ban Ki-moon, “Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the United Nations Mission in Colombia”, S/2016/729, August 18, 2016.

Reports from the United Nations Human Rights Council:

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Situation in Colombia”, A/HRC/37/3/Add.3, March 2, 2018.





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