

Debate Pack

CDP-119 (2021)
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12 July 2021

Peace and human rights in Colombia

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1 Background

A debate on a Motion relating to Peace and human rights in Colombia has been scheduled for Thursday 15th July 2021 at 3.15pm in Westminster Hall.

The debate has been initiated by Kate Osborne MP

1.1 Peace and human rights in Colombia

Overview

Colombia remains riven by high levels of violence, with attacks against community leaders, human rights defenders, former combatants and women, of particular concern.

This is despite a historic peace agreement reached in 2016 with the largest paramilitary force in Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Near daily anti-government protests have been occurring across Colombia since late April 2021. The protests were sparked by opposition to a proposed tax reform but have now developed into a vehicle for anger about the economic situation in Colombia, and police violence. More than 60 people have died during the recent demonstrations and there have been concerns about the use of violence by police dealing with the protests.

Historical roots of violence in Colombia

In the period 1964-71 left-wing guerrilla groups emerged in Colombia, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), the Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL), and M-19. The roots of their armed campaign lie in the '*La Violencia*', a ten-year civil war (1948-57) between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Communist guerrilla groups were excluded from the power-sharing agreement which ended the violence and they took up arms against the new unified government.

These guerrilla groups were largely concentrated in rural areas and controlled significant proportions of territory; many of them raised revenue by cultivating and trading in cocaine.

Peace initiatives by various Colombian governments in the 80s, 90s and 2000s all failed to end the violence.

FARC peace accord

Former President Juan Santos, first elected in 2010, began a new peace initiative in 2012. After four years of negotiations, his government signed a peace agreement with Colombia's main paramilitary force, the FARC, in November 2016.

The conflict was, [according to The Economist](#): “the longest-running domestic conflict in the western hemisphere, [it] killed over 200,000 people and displaced around 7 million”.

The main elements of the peace deal were:

- **The end of violence:** FARC agreed to end their armed campaign and move their fighters into UN- monitored camps where they would disarm in phases over a period of 180 days.
- **Justice for victims of the conflict:** Colombia would establish a transitional justice system (JEP). Special tribunals would adjudicate war crimes and other atrocities committed by the rebels as well as paramilitary groups and government security forces.

If combatants fully admit to their crimes, they would be eligible for alternative sentences (with a maximum of 8 years of restricted liberty) and ‘restorative’ justice aimed at making amends to victims. If they did not tell the truth, they would be vulnerable to criminal prosecution and sentences of up to 20 years in prison.

- **Rural development:** the government promised to invest heavily in infrastructure projects and state-building in FARC-controlled areas which had previously seen very little investment.
- **Seats in Congress:** FARC would be assured a minimum of five seats in Colombia's Senate and five seats in its House of Representatives for two legislative terms, starting in 2018. After that they would have to win seats competitively.
- **Ending the drug trade:** FARC agreed to stop drug trafficking and work with the government to wean Colombia's rural farmers off coca.

Criticisms produce new deal

The peace deal was narrowly rejected by the Colombian people in a referendum in October 2016. President Santos made changes to the agreement to satisfy some of the less strident opponents of the deal. Rather than putting the new agreement to the people, Mr Santos ratified it through Congress, where the President had a governing majority.

The new deal still contained the most unpopular elements of the previous accord. Firstly, seats in Congress for FARC – opponents of the deal wanted

FARC leaders found guilty of the worst crimes barred for running from office until they had served their sentences. Secondly, the transitional justice system which, many Colombians saw as too lenient.

One of the most outspoken critics of the FARC peace deal was former President Alvaro Uribe (2002-10). Mr Uribe co-founded a new political party, the Democratic Centre (*Centro Democrático*), in 2013, largely to oppose the peace process in the 2014 elections.

President Duque elected

The 2018 Presidential elections were won by Iván Duque, a protégé of Uribe, who ran on a platform of overhauling the FARC peace deal and taking a tougher line against guerrilla groups. He promised to impose tougher punishments on crimes committed by the rebels and remove their guaranteed right to seats.

In the 2018 Congressional elections, the new FARC political party didn't gain enough votes to win any competitive seats, achieving less than one per cent of votes for both the House of Representatives and Senate. Duque's Democratic Centre party gained the second largest share of seats.

Duque's attempts to change the Accord

After his election President Duque focused his criticisms of the FARC peace accord on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), a parallel court system designed to try war crimes committed during the conflict.

In 2019 Duque [asked](#) the Colombian Congress to change parts of the law that regulates the JEP, but the President's party did not have the numbers in either House of Congress to make such changes. The Supreme Court have also [rejected](#) requests to change the peace deal saying this can only be done by Congress.

Implementation of the FARC peace accord

The [Kroc Institute](#), which monitors the progress of the peace accord, produced its [fifth comprehensive report](#) in May 2021, looking at progress made in 2020. The institute said implementation is advancing at a slightly slower pace compared to previous years, but this was "primarily due to the shift in focus to advancing medium and long-term goals".

The implementation of the accord was affected by "two overarching challenges" during 2020:

- The first was the upsurge in armed confrontations between illegal organisations, as well as confrontations between these organisations and the armed forces and police. As a result, "a number of threats, targeted killings, massacres, and other forms of violence against human

rights defenders, leaders of social and environmental causes, and ex-combatants in the reincorporation process were recorded”. Several illegal armed group factions have emerged after their leaders withdrew from the peace process.

- The second major challenge was the mobility restrictions and the intensification of inequity and vulnerability linked to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has “especially hindered participatory processes fundamental to implementation”.

ELN negotiations

The Marxist National Liberation Army (ELN), continues to operate with approximately 2,000 active fighters and is Colombia’s second largest guerrilla group. Former President Santos had hoped to sign a ceasefire deal with the ELN, before he left office in August 2018. However, the two sides were unable to reach a full agreement.

President Duque, while promising a tougher negotiating stance towards the ELN during his election campaign, did undertake talks with the guerrilla group. However, Duque suspended talks with the group after they [claimed responsibility](#) for a car bomb that exploded at a police academy, killing 21 people in January 2019.

Since then, Duque’s government has demanded the group declare a unilateral cease-fire, including ending kidnappings, and release all hostages as a precondition to holding peace talks. Conditions the ELN have rejected. The group did [release several hostages](#) in June 2020, but is believed to still be holding at least ten more.

ELN leader Pablo Beltran, [expressed hopes](#) at the end of 2020 that the new US Biden administration might help re-start talks.

Killings of community leaders, human rights defenders, and former combatants

Colombia was “widely recognized as the most dangerous country in the world for those who defend human rights”, [according to Amnesty International](#), and protection measures for them “remained limited and ineffective, and impunity for crimes against them continued”. In 2020, the organisation said, “killings of social leaders reached shocking levels”.

As of September 2020, Colombia’s Attorney General’s Office was investigating 397 cases of murder of human rights defenders since 2016 and had obtained convictions in 61 cases. Human Rights Watch [have said](#) authorities have made “much less progress in prosecuting people who ordered murders against human rights defenders”.

Amnesty International also [report that](#) “state security forces continued illegal surveillance and smear campaigns against social leaders, journalists and government opponents”.

In December 2020, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, [urged](#) the Colombian government to tackle violence “targeting peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people” and called on State authorities to take concrete actions to effectively protect the population:

I call on the Colombian authorities to take stronger and much more effective action to protect the population from this appalling and pervasive violence. [...] It is the State's duty to be present throughout the country, implementing a whole range of comprehensive public policies, not only to clamp down on those responsible for the violence, but also to provide basic services and safeguard the fundamental rights of the population.

In February 2021, amid domestic and international criticism of the killings, [President Duque said](#) his government would boost military operations against the criminal groups responsible and also send more judges to remote areas.

Other human rights concerns

Gender-based violence, including by armed groups, is “widespread” in Colombia, [according to Human Rights Watch](#), and perpetrators of violent, gender-based crimes are “rarely held accountable”. Amnesty International [stated that](#) during the isolation measures imposed to curb COVID-19 in 2020, reports of gender-based violence increased.

Human rights groups also raised concerns over the treatment of indigenous people in Colombia, and the entrenched poverty in the community.

2021 Protests

Mass anti-government protests happened sporadically across [2019](#) and [2020](#), after anger was sparked by government tax initiatives and pension reforms, as well as the perception by some that the government was not properly implementing the peace accord.

In April 2021 a government proposal to raise taxes to try and deal with the economic crisis cause by Covid-19, saw [four days of protests](#) across dozens of cities, with the government then withdrawing the proposals. This was not enough to satisfy the government’s opponents and the protests turned into a mass movement with almost daily demonstrations that continue today. Grievances include economic inequality, police violence, unemployment, and poor public services. By the end of June 2021, more than [60 people had died](#) during the demonstrations.

Human Rights Watch [have accused](#) the members of the Colombian National Police of committing “egregious abuses against mostly peaceful demonstrators” during these demonstrations.

In May 2021, President Duque said in [an interview](#) that while he recognized that some officers had been violent, he did not view the problem as systemic. “There have been acts of abuse of force,” he said. But “just saying that there could be any possibility that the Colombian police will be seen as a systematic abuser of human rights — well, that will be not only unfair, unjust, but without any base, any ground.”

The President later [asked Congress](#) to pass measures aimed at reforming the country’s national police, including the creation of a human rights directorate within the department and the introduction of body cameras for all street-level officers.

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Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or the accuracy of external content.

[Colombian court accuses soldiers of murdering at least 120 civilians](#)

Guardian (Reuters)

6 Jul 2021

[Colombian army under investigation for 'executing children during Farc raid'](#)

Telegraph (*Subscription required*)

Mathew Charles, Edinson Bolanos and Nicolas Sanchez

26 Jun 2021

[Helicopter carrying Colombian president and senior officials hit by gunfire](#)

Guardian (Associated Press)

26 Jun 2021

['The risk you run': Colombia's women protesters on sexual violence](#)

BBC News Online

Sophie Foggin

23 Jun 2021

[Colombia unrest: President Duque pledges police reform after protests](#)

BBC News Online

6 Jun 2021

[Colombia protests: UN calls for investigation into Cali deaths](#)

BBC News Online

30 May 2021

[Colombian protests: Poverty and the pandemic collide with conflict and migration](#)

New Humanitarian

Genevieve Glatsky

10 May 2021

[Colombia enters second week of violent unrest as police crackdown on protests](#)

Guardian

Joe Parkin Daniels

6 May 2021

[Power rivalries put pressure on Colombia's peace treaty](#)

Chatham House

Mariano Aguirre

28 Feb 2021

[Colombian police killed 86 people in 2020, report reveals](#)

Guardian

Joe Parkin Daniels

25 Feb 2021

[Colombia's fragile peace deal threatened by the return of mass killings](#)

The Conversation

Camilo Tamayo Gomez

15 Feb 2021

[Colombia's FARC adopts new name as it rebrands itself](#)

Al Jazeera

25 Jan 2021

[US-opposed probe of Colombia's Uribe is essential step in road to peace](#)

Just Security

Michael Evans and Juan Franco

18 Nov 2020

[US cables: Colombia's ex-president suspected of militia ties](#)

AP News

Christine Armario

31 Aug 2020

[Another intelligence scandal in Colombia highlights the need for lasting reform](#)

World Politics Review

Adam Isacson

5 Jun 2020

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Press releases

[Colombia: ICJ joins 300 NGOs expressing concern about human rights violations before UN Human Rights Council](#)

International Commission of Jurists

23 Jun 2021

[IACHR requests authorization to conduct a working visit to Colombia in the wake of alleged human rights violations during social protests](#)

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

14 May 2021

[Colombia: UN and OAS experts condemn crackdown on peaceful protests, urge a thorough and impartial investigation](#)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

14 May 2021

[Implementing Colombia's historic peace agreement](#) [speech]

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

21 Apr 2021

['Stay the course', build on progress already made, Special Representative urges parties to Colombia Peace Accord in briefing to Security Council](#)

UN Security Council

21 Apr 2021

[Transitional justice and ongoing peace processes in Colombia](#) [speech]

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

14 Oct 2020

[United Kingdom-Colombia Trade Dialogue: A new relationship for a new world](#)

Department for International Trade Colombia

10 Jul 2020

[The need for lasting peace in Colombia is even greater in these uncertain times](#)

[speech]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 Apr 2020

[UN Human Rights Council 43: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders](#) [speech]

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

4 Mar 2020

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PQs

Colombia: Demonstrations

21 Jun 2021 | 16245

Asked by: Feryal Clark

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of armed civilians opening fire on demonstrators in the presence of police officers during recent protests in Colombia.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The British Government is concerned about reports of armed civilians opening fire on demonstrators in the presence of police officers. We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and that the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed. Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country', and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express our concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into all allegations. I made it clear that the security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated.

We will continue to work closely with the UN Verification Mission, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, as well as the wider international community, in support of their efforts to reduce tensions, promote dialogue, and ensure accountability.

Colombia: Police Brutality

17 Jun 2021 | 14071

Asked by: Apsana Begum

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of ocular injuries as a result of the actions of the Colombian police during protests in that country between 28 April and 31 May 2021.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government, and in multilateral fora. We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and that the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed.

Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country', and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to express my concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse. We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any reports on excessive use of force against protestors, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, and any complaints thoroughly investigated.

Colombia: Homicide

17 Jun 2021 | 14070

Asked by: Apsana Begum

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Colombian counterpart on the reported ongoing killings of former FARC combatants who have laid down their weapons under the peace process.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The British Government regularly raises concerns with our Colombian counterparts regarding the persistent high levels of violence, and threats towards former FARC combatants. Most recently, we raised the issue on 21 April at the UN Security Council meeting, at which the UN Secretary General's Special Representative presented his quarterly report on Colombia's peace process.

We will continue to support the Colombian Government's commitment to assisting former combatants in transitioning to civilian life, as agreed as part of the 2016 peace agreement. We have committed more than £63 million over 5 years through our Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund to support reintegration, rural development, and security across conflict-affected regions. We have done this through programmes designed to build state capacity to ensure the safety of former combatants, and of other vulnerable individuals and groups, including outside of official reincorporation zones.

National Crime Agency: Colombia

16 Jun 2021 | 14220

Asked by: Kenny MacAskill

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the National Crime Agency continues to train Colombia's security units in light of the recent internal repression in that country.

Answered by: Kit Malthouse | Home Office

The NCA works with law enforcement counterparts around the world, including in various South American countries. In Colombia, the NCA works with a number of Colombian departments including the Colombian National Police and the Office of the Attorney General of Colombia. This activity is focused on reducing the threat to the UK from the cocaine trade in Colombia and the region, as well as disrupting the money laundering and other criminal economies linked to drugs trafficking and other organised crime. All of NCA's activity overseas, including the provision of security and justice assistance to partners is conducted in accordance with International Human Rights Legislation and HMG policy. Projects delivered under the Conflict Stability and Security Fund are subject to a robust governance framework to ensure they are delivered effectively and in accordance with HMG government objectives.

Colombia: Police

27 May 2021 | 4529

Asked by: Tony Lloyd

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether the Government's support for the transformation of the Colombian National Police includes a disestablishment from the Colombian Ministry of Defence as called for by human rights organisations in that country.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The internal structures of the Colombian Government and state are a matter for that Government.

Colombia: Freedom of Association and Protest

26 May 2021 | 4735

Asked by: Navendu Mishra

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government is taking to ensure that (a) the right to protest and (b) freedom of association is respected in Colombia.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully, and that the right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed. Colombia is a UK 'Human Rights Priority Country', and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia since protests began. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14

May to express our concerns, and welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse.

We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any excessive use of force, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated. We will continue to work closely with the UN Verification Mission, and the UN Office of the High Representative for Human Rights in Colombia, as well as the wider international community, in support of their efforts to reduce tensions and promote dialogue.

Colombia: Police Brutality

25 May 2021 | 4664

Asked by: Lloyd Russell-Moyle

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he has plans to review arms export licences issued for Colombia in response to the reported human rights abuses committed by Colombian police during protests in April and May 2021.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

HM Government takes its export control responsibilities very seriously and operates one of the most robust arms export control regimes in the world. We consider all our export applications thoroughly against a strict risk assessment framework and keep all licences under careful and continual review as standard. HM Government will not grant an export licence if to do so would be inconsistent with the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria.

Colombia: Human Rights

25 May 2021 | 4526

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps are being taken to ensure Colombian police units receiving UK police training are not involved in human rights abuses.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are clear that we support the right of all Colombians to protest peacefully. We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully the excessive use of force against protesters, and take appropriate action against those responsible. Security services must be held accountable for their actions, with all complaints thoroughly investigated. The UK is a key

supporter of the implementation of Colombia's historic peace agreement. Over the past five years, the UK has provided £63 million through the Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund (CSSF), which has allowed us to provide niche technical and financial support on stabilisation, peacebuilding, and transitional justice.

Our Embassy regularly reviews Overseas Security and Justice Assessments, ensuring steps are taken to mitigate any risk human rights abuses, and strengthen the impact of our interventions on improving respect for human rights. HMG work on security and justice overseas is based on British values, including human rights and democracy.

Colombia: Politics and Government

29 Apr 2021 | 188052

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, when the Government plans to publish the programme summary for the Police Innovations for Stabilisation in Colombia Programme.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The £2.1 million Police Innovations for Stabilisation in Colombia multi-year project was launched in 2020 and is supporting the transformation of the Colombian National Police. The intervention aims to contribute to the modernization of the police service by scaling up and improving police practices with a preventive approach, focusing on i) Community-based police prevention; ii) Transformation of large-scale social conflicts from a rights-based approach; and iii) Gender mainstreaming. This work is part of the CSSF Colombia Peace and Stabilisation Programme.

The CSSF programme summaries for 20/21 will be published by Cabinet Office before Parliament rises for summer.

Colombia: Bombings

29 Apr 2021 | 187348

Asked by: Navendu Mishra

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that several children were killed in a military bombing raid against illegal armed groups in Guaviare, southern Colombia on 2 March 2021.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK remains extremely concerned by the continued recruitment of minors by illegal armed groups in Colombia. We most recently raised this issue on 21 April at the UN Security Council meeting, at which the UN Secretary General's Special Representative presented his quarterly report on Colombia's peace process. We urged all armed groups to immediately release all minors from their ranks, also expressing our concerns about the tragic deaths of minors during Government operations against armed groups in Guaviare last month, and welcomed the Government's investigation into these deaths.

The UK is an active permanent member of the United Nations Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), which leads the international response to violations committed against children in conflict. We regularly raise concerns with the Colombian Government, and at the UN, and will continue to do so.

Colombia: Politics and Government

27 Apr 2021 | 183146

Asked by: Ian Lavery

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his Colombian counterpart on urgently implementing agreements signed by the Colombian Government with communities in Buenaventura as recommended by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 19 March 2021.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government remains concerned about reports of violence and insecurity in Colombia, including in Buenaventura. Embassy teams have visited Buenaventura twice this year to meet with key local stakeholders to discuss peace and security challenges. In April, the Embassy attended and supported the launch of the Buenaventura Search Pact, signed by the Unit for the Search for Disappeared People, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission, and the representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Pact is an initiative to support families of people that have disappeared and put in place measures to address forced disappearances, structural violence and insecurity in Buenaventura.

This support is part of the UK's efforts to help implement the 2016 Peace Accords and improve security, human rights, and justice in Colombia. In addition, UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues with their Colombian counterparts. Most recently, the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, raised our concerns around levels of violence, on

a virtual visit to Colombia in February. We will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia.

Colombia: Violence

20 Apr 2021 | 181189

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of reports of threats of violence made against human rights defenders and environmental organisations in Barrancabermeja and Magdalena Medio, Colombia.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government remains concerned about the persistent level of violence towards human rights defenders, and environmental activists in Colombia. Colombia is a UK Government 'Human Rights Priority Country' - UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government, and in multilateral fora. Most recently, the UK's Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, raised our concerns around killings of human rights defenders, as well as media freedom and sexual violence, on a virtual visit to Colombia in February. We will continue to raise our concerns with the relevant state actors in Colombia.

Through our CSSF programme, which has provided £63 million in support of peace agreement implementation, security and stability in Colombia since 2015, we continue to prioritise funding interventions to protect human rights defenders, social leaders, and ex-combatants. In Barrancabermeja and Magdalena Medio specifically, we are supporting the work of the Transitional Justice System and the Organisation of American States' Peace Process Support Mission. We are also funding civil society participation in the implementation of the peace agreement, and the development and implementation of rural development plans in conflict-affected territories.

Colombia: Armed Conflict

20 Apr 2021 | 178638

Asked by: Ellie Reeves

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of recent information released by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia that that the security forces of that country intentionally killed at least 6,402 civilians between 2002 and 2008.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The ongoing work by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace is vital for the transitional justice process agreed as part of the peace agreement. We have been clear that all actors being investigated, including the security services, must be held accountable for their actions, and any crimes thoroughly investigated. The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, including mechanisms like the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and supporting the Colombian government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain our top priority.

We have contributed more than £60 million in support via the UK's Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund and are the largest donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. We are proud to lead on the issue at the UN Security Council, and will continue to strengthen the international community's support and commitment to peace, stability, and justice in Colombia.

Colombia: Overseas Aid

18 Mar 2021 | 168836

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what (a) financial and (b) technical support the UK provides to the Colombian (i) police and (ii) armed forces.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK is a key supporter of the implementation of Colombia's historic peace agreement. Over the past five years, the UK has provided £61.7 million through the Conflict, Security, and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF), which has allowed us to provide niche technical and financial support on stabilisation, policing, and transitional justice. In 2020, the UK launched a three year £2.1 million Police Innovations for Stabilisation in Colombia Programme (SCIP), which is helping the transformation of the Colombian National Police. The SCIP aims to contribute to the modernization of the police service by scaling up and improving police practices with a preventive approach, focusing on i) Community-based police prevention; ii) Transformation of large-scale social conflicts from a rights-based approach; and iii) Gender mainstreaming.

Fewer than 10 UK armed forces personnel are deployed to Colombia in support of the Colombian police and armed forces, as well as in capacity building support to the Colombian Ministry of Defence, which has responsibility for both the Colombian Armed Forces and the police service.

Colombia: Politics and Government

9 Feb 2021 | HL12600

Asked by: Baroness Kennedy of Cradley

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the (1) political, and (2) economic, situation in Colombia.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

Significant progress has been made in Colombia since its 2016 Peace Accords, and supporting the Colombian government in implementing them fully remains a UK Government priority. Challenges remain, however, particularly related to security in some areas, and the threats faced by human rights defenders and social leaders.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant economic impact on Colombia. Its economy has shrunk for the first time in over 20 years. However, the IMF emphasises that the Colombian economy has "strong underlying fundamentals," and the government has ambitious plans to support economic recovery. The UK Government considers Colombia an attractive opportunity for British business. Our continuity Free Trade Agreement has been ratified by the Colombian Congress, and is now being considered by the Constitutional Court.

Colombia: Diplomatic Relations

23 Oct 2020 | 105414

Asked by: Patrick Grady

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether a representative from the UK embassy in Colombia has (a) been invited to and (b) attended a meeting with members of the indigenous Wayuu Community and the Jesuit Centre for Research and Popular Education on the operations of the Carbones de Cerrejón company at its Tajo Patilla mining site.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Representatives from the UK Embassy were invited to a recent meeting with members of the Wayuu community and Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP) to discuss Cerrejón. Unfortunately, due to scheduling pressures, no-one from the Embassy was able to attend. Instead, FCDO officials in London convened a separate meeting with the Wayuu and CINEP to hear their concerns, and have fed them back to Embassy staff.

Colombia: Homicide

3 Sep 2020 | 82672

Asked by: Kate Osborne

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of reports of a massacre in Tibu in Colombia on 18 July 2020.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are aware of reports of killings and subsequent displacement of civilians in the Norte de Santander border areas of Cúcuta and Tibú in mid-July, following competition between rival armed groups for control of illicit economies and territory. The UK remains most concerned about the continuing presence of such groups in Colombia, and the serious impact their crimes and other activities have on local people and environments, particularly during this challenging time.

President Duque's Government has publicly committed to implementing the Peace Accords of 2016 in their entirety, and we remain steadfast in our support of the Colombian authorities as they seek to ensure sustainable peace. We are proud to be the penholder on the issue at the UN Security Council. Most recently, our Permanent Representative to the UN spoke on the continued presence of illegal armed groups in Colombia at the UN Security Council on 14 July.

We have committed almost £53 million over 5 years through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund to support the implementation of the peace process in Colombia, including across conflict-affected regions such as Norte de Santander. Many of the humanitarian organisations supported by the United Kingdom are operating in the region and working to provide support to those displaced. We will continue to monitor the situation.

5 Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Debates

Colombia: Human Rights

12 July 2021 | House of Lords | 813 cc1535-1538

Latin America: Future Foreign Policy

21 Apr 2021 | House of Lords | 811 cc1837-9

Lords oral questions on what assessment the government has made of (1) the need for, and (2) the benefits of, engaging with countries in Latin America as part of the United Kingdom's future foreign policy

Colombia

7 Dec 2020 | House of Lords | 808 cc952-5

Lords oral questions on what assessment the government has made of the impact of their support for (1) human rights, and (2) the peace process, in Colombia

Colombia Peace Process

18 Jun 2019 | House of Commons | 662 cc82-98WH

Colombia Peace Process

12 Sep 2018 | House of Commons | 646 cc338-59WH

5.2 Early Day Motions

Unrest and human rights violations in Colombia

EDM 24 (2021-22 session)

12 May 2021

Patricia Gibson

That this House is deeply shocked and concerned about reports of significant human rights violations in Colombia and violent repression of nationwide demonstrations by Colombian authorities; understands that protests began on 28 April 2021 in response to a tax bill presented by President Ivan Duque; notes with concern reports that the country's riot police has responded to protestors with excessive force; is disturbed to learn of the deaths of dozens of people with hundreds more injured in recent unrest; has ongoing concerns about the worrying reports of the use by state authorities of arbitrary detention, acts of torture, sexual violence and forced disappearances;

understands that human rights defenders have been harassed and threatened, while union leaders and indigenous activists have been targeted by authorities; calls on the Colombian Government to immediately stop the violent and militarised response to protests and to ensure that human rights, including the right to life, the right to free expression and the right to freedom of peaceful assembly are upheld; and calls on the UK Government to exert all diplomatic pressure to help ensure that the situation in Colombia reaches a peaceful resolution and human rights are upheld.

Protests in Colombia

EDM 4 (2021-22 session)

11 May 2021

Tony Lloyd

That this House expresses profound concern on reports of excessive use of force by the Colombian police, against overwhelmingly peaceful social protests as confirmed by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights across Colombia from 28 April 2021, as part of a national strike; believes the right to peaceful protest and freedom of assembly are essential tenets of democracy; condemns serious human rights violations allegedly carried out by the police, including the use of live ammunition resulting in the deaths of over 30 protesters, numerous cases of sexual violence and serious injuries, over 100 people reported disappeared, over 800 arbitrary arrests, and targeted attacks on civil society organisations and human rights defenders, some of whom were trying to monitor the police; also condemns the small minority who infiltrated the peaceful protests and perpetrated violence; notes with alarm the Colombian Government's order to militarise the cities and urges them instead to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the protest organisers to address their legitimate grievances; calls on the Government to review its training of the Colombian Police, suspend the sale of riot control materials and review all other arms exports to Colombia in light of the current situation; and further calls on the Government as pen holders for the Colombian peace process at the UN Security Council to promote substantive reform of the Colombian security services and full implementation of the Peace Accord.

6 Further reading

6.1 Library briefings

[Colombia peace progress](#), Commons Library Debate Pack, 13 Jun 2019

[Peace process in Colombia](#), Commons Library Debate Pack, 10 Sep 2018

6.2 Committee publications

[Letter to the Chair of the Committee from the Foreign Secretary on protecting female and Indigenous human rights defenders in Colombia](#)

International Development Committee

Dated 12 Nov 2020 | Published 19 Nov 2020

[Letter to the Foreign Secretary from the Chair of the Committee on protecting female and Indigenous human rights defenders in Colombia](#)

International Development Committee

Dated 14 Oct 2020 | Published 19 Nov 2020

[A brave new Britain? The future of the UK's international policy](#)

Foreign Affairs Committee

HC 380 2019-21 | 22 Oct 2020

- Juan Manuel Santos [President of Colombia 2010–18]
Oral evidence 21 Jul 2020 [Q96-114]

6.3 Other

[Trade and Investment factsheet: Colombia](#)

Department for International Trade

7 Jul 2021

[The Pandemic Strikes: Responding to Colombia's Mass Protests](#)

International Crisis Group

Latin America Report No 90

2 Jul 2021

Evil Hour: Annual Report 2020

ISAAHRD [Information System on Attacks Against Human Rights Defenders in Colombia]
Somos Defensores (We Are Defenders) Programme
20 May 2021

Resolution 2574 (2021)

[Expansion and extension of the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia]
S/RES/2574 (2021)
UN Security Council
11 May 2021

5th anniversary of the Peace Agreement in Colombia

European Parliament resolution 2021/2643(RSP)
29 Apr 2021

United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Report of the UN Secretary-General
S/2021/298
UN Security Council
26 Mar 2021

Situation of human rights in Colombia

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
A/HRC/46/76
UN Human Rights Council
17 Mar 2021

Colombia: Events of 2020

World Report 2021
Human Rights Watch

Why do they want to kill us? Lack of safe space to defend human rights in Colombia

Amnesty International
8 Oct 2020

What is peace about? The implementation of the 2-year Agreement of the Duque Government

Juanita Goebertus [Member of the House of Representatives of Colombia]
18 Aug 2020

“The guerrillas are the police”. Social control and abuses by armed groups in Colombia’s Arauca Province and Venezuela’s Apure State

Human Rights Watch
22 Jan 2020

[UK Programme Funds in Colombia](#)

British Embassy Bogotá

16 Apr 2019

[UK Prosperity Fund for Colombia](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Colombia](#) (Membership)

6.4

E-petition

[Seek international action to resolve unrest in Colombia](#)

e-Petition 584989

12 May 2021

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