

Debate Pack

CDP-0081 (2022)

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Human rights in Colombia and implementation of the 2016 peace agreement

1	Summary	2
2	Background	2
3	FCDO Human Rights and Democracy report	8
4	Press articles	11
5	Press releases	13
6	PQs	21
7	Debates	35
8	Early Day Motions	36

1

Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on human rights in Colombia and implementation of the 2016 peace agreement is scheduled for Wednesday 20 April 2022, from 9.30-11.00am. The debate will be led by Paula Barker MP.

2

Background

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).

There were major protests in Colombia from April to August 2021. The protests were sparked by opposition to a proposed tax reform but then developed into a vehicle for anger about the economic situation in Colombia, and police violence. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) [raised serious 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 admitted 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 1% 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”.

In a [November 2021 report](#) the International Crisis Group (ICG), said that the “FARC turned its back on war but is struggling to find its place in peaceful public life”. It said the Colombian Government had been “sluggish” in making rural and other reforms, while ex-guerrillas contend with economic hardship amid the rise of violent “dissident” factions. The ICG stated that the former FARC leadership have kept a tight hold on their newly created party and failed to build public support. It called upon the US Government to remove the demobilised FARC from its list of foreign terrorist organisations, arguing it has prevented the successful economic and social reinsertion of many ex-combatants, who “cannot do things as mundane as opening bank accounts”.

In January 2022, the ICG [warned that](#) “Colombia’s hard-won peace is withering in the countryside”. It stated that armed conflict is “now escalating in a small but growing number of rural pockets, where communities report that violence and coercion are as bad as or worse than before the peace agreement”.

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. However, there has [been no recent progress](#), and the ELN [continues to carry out violent attacks](#). The ELN has [had a presence in Venezuela for decades](#) and will launch attacks into Colombia from across the border. The Colombian Government [accuse the](#)

[Venezuelan Government of harbouring the ELN](#), something that President Maduro has denied.

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”.

In February 2021, amid domestic and international criticism of the killings, [President Duque had said](#) his government would boost military operations against the criminal groups responsible and also send more judges to remote areas. In March 2021, he [defended his Government against criticisms that it had not done enough to protect activists](#), pledging to not rest “a single day” in its fight against the armed groups it blames for the violence. He added most activists who have been killed had not requested government protection, but stated that his administration had shortened the time that activists who report threats wait before receiving protection.

However, in January 2022, Carlos Camargo, Colombia’s human rights ombudsman, [reported the deaths of at least 145 community leaders and rights defenders in 2021](#). The victims included indigenous leaders, trade unionists and representatives of rural communities.

Mr Camargo said most of the killings were linked to illegal armed groups but did not name the alleged perpetrators.

In the same month the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [released its own figures](#), saying it had received 202 reports of the death of human rights leaders in Colombia in 2021. It confirmed 78 had been killed, 39 cases were still being verified, and 85 were inconclusive.

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 continued until the end of July . Grievances include economic inequality, police violence, unemployment, and poor public services. By the end of June 2021, it was reported that 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.

The OHCHR published a [report on the protests in December 2021](#), that called upon Colombia to “urgently reform how it polices protests” in the wake of the demonstrations. It documented various instances of unnecessary or disproportionate use of force by police officers during the protests.

Its office in Colombia received more than 60 allegations of deaths in the context of the protests, and so far, it has verified the deaths of 46 people: 44 civilians and two police officers. Most of the documented deaths, 76%, were from gunshot wounds.

2022 Presidential elections

New Presidential elections will be held this year, the [first round](#) will be held on 29 May 2022. Duque is ineligible to run as Colombian Presidents can only serve one term. The leading candidate [appears to be Gustavo Petro](#), a former guerrilla member-turned-politician. If elected he would be the first president from the political left in Colombia’s history.

3

FCDO Human Rights and Democracy report

Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office report

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

8 July 2021

[Extract]

Colombia

While significant progress had been made since the signature of Colombia's landmark Peace Agreement in 2016, considerable human rights concerns remained, particularly around the high number of killings of human rights defenders (HRDs) and continued violence in some areas. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, identified these concerns as the biggest threat posed to the success of the Peace Agreement.

Although there was a reduction of the national homicide rate (from 25 to 23.7 per 100,000 persons in 2020, compared to 2019), killings increased in certain areas of the country throughout the year, largely where the Peace Agreement's crop substitution programme and the PDETs (Territorially Focused Development Plans) were being implemented. Lockdown measures and travel restrictions introduced to combat COVID-19 increased the risk to HRDs from illegal armed groups, since they were more easily targeted, and often killed, near their homes. Community and indigenous leaders were most affected. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) confirmed that at least 133 HRDs had been killed in 2020, an increase from 108 in 2019.

The Colombian Government reiterated its commitment to protecting HRDs, and there were some improvements in the situation. The Attorney General's Office increased convictions of perpetrators, including of those ordering the killings. The UK contributed to the protection of Colombian HRDs in many ways. For example, we supported the special unit at the Attorney General's Office in charge of investigating attacks against HRDs; helped boost the capacity of the Ombudsman's Office early warning system to act against threats; contributed to the funding of a study to identify patterns and causes of attacks against HRDs; and supported the system set up to establish protection mechanisms. In 2021, the UK will support a new joint programme, funded through the UN Trust Fund, working across the Colombian Government to establish safe spaces for social leaders and former FARC fighters.

The full implementation of the Peace Agreement continued to be crucial to improve the security situation for former FARC combatants, 248 of whom were killed from 2016 to 2020, with 73 of these killings taking place in 2020. The Government expressed its solidarity, and committed to protecting them and their families, but not enough was done to provide security in conflict-affected areas.

Colombia's lengthy lockdown because of COVID-19 allowed illegal armed groups to expand and exert more control over certain communities. As well as threats and killings, armed groups carried out forced displacements and vehicle incinerations as punishment for not abiding by their movement restrictions. In addition, they blocked land and waterways, and disrupted the arrival of food and medical supplies. Although the national lockdown was lifted on 1 September, armed groups continued their own lockdowns in some regions.

Criminal groups settling scores or vying for control of territory led to the killing of at least 292 people, with perpetrators ranging from narco-trafficking organisations to armed groups and dissidents who rejected the peace process. The Colombian Defence Ministry created a Special Unit to identify, locate and prosecute the perpetrators.

Colombia fell one place in the Reporters without Borders Media Freedom Index, ranking 130 out of 180 countries. Violence and fear leading to self-censorship were the most common threats. The UK continued to defend media freedom through supporting projects to strengthen and facilitate the creation of local media outlets in municipalities lacking them.

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) remained one of the UK's top priorities. We engaged in high-level conversations to address sexual violence in conflict, and funded a project to produce informative and educational pieces to tackle sexual and gender-based violence and mental health in indigenous communities.

Violent protests broke out in September after a video went viral on social media, showing Bogotá police repeatedly shocking a man with a taser during an arrest; he later died in hospital. 13 protesters died in the demonstrations that followed, and over 400 people were injured, including over 100 police officers. There were reports of some police firing indiscriminately into crowds gathered outside police stations, a number of which were burned down during the protests. The Government condemned the excessive use of force by some police, suspended the officers involved, and launched an investigation. The UK welcomed this investigation and affirmed its support for Colombians' right to protest peacefully.

In addition to its programme activities, the UK continued to raise concerns about human rights both directly with the Government and in multilateral

fora such as the UN Security Council. In October, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, the Minister responsible for human rights, held a virtual visit to Colombia. He met HRDs, survivors of sexual violence, journalists, and a range of government officials including the Deputy Attorney General, Martha Mancera, to discuss how the UK could provide further support. In 2021, we plan to build on these suggestions and seek to provide targeted UK expertise and assistance where it can make the most impact.

4

Press 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 accuracy of external content.

[Colombia bars social leaders from speaking before UN security council](#)

Colombia Reports
Adriaan Alsema
11 April 2022

[Violence in eastern Colombia has left 130 dead this year, UN and Catholic Church say](#)

CNN
Jorge Engels and Stefano Pozzebon
30 March 2022

[More rights defenders murdered in 2021, with 138 activists killed just in Colombia](#)

The Guardian
Karen McVeigh
2 March 2022

[Opinion: To build peace in war-torn Colombia, we need to think smaller](#)

Devex
Alejandro Castillejo Cuéllar, Peter Dixon and Pamina Firchow
11 February 2022

[Colombia struck a peace deal with guerrilla groups years ago. So why is violence surging?](#)

CNN
Stefano Pozzebon
6 February 2022

[Colombia's top court orders government to protect ex-FARC rebels](#)

Al Jazeera
28 January 2022

[At least 78 rights defenders killed in Colombia in 2021 – UN](#)

Reuters
13 January 2022

[Colombia: Children still ‘used and abused’ despite historic peace accord](#)

UN News

12 January 2022

[Why are so many environmental activists being killed in Colombia?](#)

Sky News

Victoria Seabrook

28 December 2021

[Colombia’s fragile peace at risk from violent dissident groups](#)

The Times

Steven Grattan

25 November 2021

[Colombia’s peace process is taking ‘deep roots’, but all sides must work together to overcome lingering challenges](#)

UN News

24 November 2021

[Five years on from Colombia’s Peace Agreement, gender inequality remains an obstacle to stable and lasting peace](#)

London School of Economics

Cristal Downing, Sofia Rivas and Ángela Olaya

24 November 2021

[UN chief visits Colombia ahead of FARC peace deal anniversary](#)

Al Jazeera

23 November 2021

[Colombia: why peace remains elusive five years after Farc deal](#)

Financial Times

Gideon Long

19 September 2021

[Five years on, Colombia’s coca regions remain at war and distrust is growing](#)

The New Humanitarian

Joshua Collins

31 August 2021

[Nearly five years into Colombia’s historic Peace Agreement, unprecedented strides in justice marked alongside lingering violence, experts tell Security Council](#)

UN Security Council

13 July 2021

5

Press releases

Maintaining momentum to realise the full promise of the Colombian Peace Agreement

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

21 January 2022

Thank you Madam President.

My thanks to the Special Representative Ruiz Massieu, for your briefing and as ever for the work of you and your team. I thank Luz Marina Giraldo for sharing your important personal perspective with the Council, as a former FARC combatant and now an active participant in the reintegration process. And I welcome Counsellor Archila, and thank you for joining us today and for your tireless efforts on behalf of peace and the implementation of the agreement.

Madam President as the Secretary-General's latest report notes, the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement in November was an important opportunity for all stakeholders in Colombia's peace process to reflect on the historic progress achieved to date, and to take stock of the challenges that remain.

The UK was proud to play our part in the commemorations, with our Minister for the Americas joining the events in Antioquia alongside the Secretary-General and President Duque.

Following these commemorations, we now look ahead to the next five-year implementation period. It is important to maintain momentum towards realising the full promise of the Agreement, and ensure its continuous and comprehensive implementation including through the upcoming electoral period.

The transitional justice system continues to be vital to this process, and 2022 will be a crucial year for its three components to deliver on their mandates. We reaffirm our ongoing support for their important work. We look forward to seeing the final report from the Truth Commission, and the first sentences to be handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. These will mark an important milestone in Colombia's reconciliation process and securing justice for victims. We welcome the preparations undertaken by the Verification Mission, in readiness to assume its mandate to verify the implementation of these SJP sentences.

Madam President, the Secretary-General's report notes a reduction in the killings of former combatants from 2020 to 2021. While this downward trend is positive, we all agree around this table that one such killing is one too many. We express concern at the increased threats by illegal armed groups, which

have resulted in the relocation of former combatants and their families from former TATRs. And we remain concerned by the persistent killings and threats targeting social and environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Just this week, we were shocked and saddened to learn that an indigenous environmental activist was killed, aged just 14 years old.

We urge the Colombian Government to continue stepping up its efforts to increase protection and security and improve state presence in conflict-affected areas, and to strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible for this violence. We also reiterate the need for all institutions to act upon the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office.

As we look ahead to the elections, we call on all political stakeholders to take steps to ensure that they will be peaceful and inclusive. In particular, we are hopeful that the 16 congressional seats for victims provide a new opportunity to increase the voice of victims in legislative processes and peace implementation.

Madam President, the parties to this Agreement have shown what can be achieved in five years through constructive dialogue and cooperation. We cannot take for granted the gains achieved thus far. We must protect and build upon them. The UK remains fully committed to working with the Colombian government and other stakeholders as they work towards securing a lasting peace.

[Press release on the Quarterly Report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia](#)

UN Verification Mission in Colombia

13 January 2022

“Colombia is proving the value of investing in peace while providing an example that violent conflicts can be ended through dialogue and that societies can heal the wounds of war and bring about development opportunities to those most in need,” affirms the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, in his latest report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, which covers the period from 25 September to 27 December 2021.

The Secretary-General highlights the fifth anniversary of the Final Peace Agreement as an opportunity for actors engaged in peacebuilding efforts and Colombian society at large to discuss the Agreement and its implementation, recognizing the historic progress as well as the major challenges that remain. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the dividends of peace he witnessed during his visit to Colombia, but reiterates his concern about the obstacles facing the consolidation of peace, especially the persisting violence in areas

prioritized for implementation. The Secretary-General notes that reversing this trend will require more sustained and effective action, noting that, should this violence persist, this “historic window of opportunity may gradually close”.

Regarding the reintegration process, the Secretary General highlights that among the most important elements of the Agreement are those creating the conditions for the transition into civilian life of former combatants who laid down their arms and remain committed to peace, pointing out that he was able to hear their hopes and concerns first-hand during his visit. During this period, the National Reintegration Council approved eight collective productive projects and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization approved 370 individual projects. The report informs that, five years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, almost 59% of the more than 13,000 accredited former combatants, including 64% of female former combatants, are involved in productive projects.

According to the report, in these five years, violence against social leaders, former combatants and communities has been concentrated largely in 30 municipalities, most of them prioritized for the implementation of the Agreement. After five years, violence against former combatants remains the single greatest threat to their transition into civilian life. Since the signing of the Agreement, 303 former combatants (10 women) have been killed, ten during the reporting period, including one woman, María Muñoz, an indigenous former combatant from Cauca.

Although the report highlights that killings of former combatants have decreased by 27% in the last year, it also notes that there is an increasing trend of threats by illegal armed groups against former combatants involved in collective initiatives, affecting their productive projects and cooperatives. Recently, the former Territorial Area for Training and Reintegration in La Macarena, Meta, had to be urgently relocated to Caquetá, following an increase in threats from illegal armed groups. The Secretary-General stresses the importance of providing former combatants with the security and support necessary for their efforts to be sustainable, including deeper transformations contained in other sections of the Agreement.

In addition, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights received information about the killings of 34 human rights defenders (7 verified and 27 under verification). Additionally, seven massacres were documented, leaving 29 victims, for a total of 56 massacres and 222 victims in 2021. In addition, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that, in 2021, approximately 72,600 people have been displaced and 65,200 forcibly confined, with indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities being particularly affected.

In this regard, the Secretary-General reiterates his call on the Government and State entities to spare no effort in comprehensively implementing the Agreement. “Reinforced progress in all sections, including pending provisions on security guarantees, and an increased presence of the State are required to unleash the Final Agreement’s transformative potential and enable civilian institutions to effectively provide long-awaited goods and services throughout the country.”

The report mentions progress in the preparations for the implementation of the Mission's mandate on the verification of the restorative sentences to be issued by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), and highlights that the Government has reaffirmed its commitment to providing the necessary support and resources and is collaborating with the SJP. The report also highlights important developments in the work of the SJP, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing, including acknowledgement of responsibility of members of the security forces accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Case 03, known as "false positives."

The Secretary-General highlights the moving encounter he had with a group of victims at the Fragmentos counter-monument, adding that it was a powerful reminder that victims are at the heart of the peace process. “Their strength and generosity must be met with genuine commitment by all parties to the conflict to contribute to the truth and acknowledge their responsibilities.” In this regard, the Secretary-General once again recognizes the work of the transitional justice system and renews his call for full cooperation and respect for it.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General highlights the efforts of Colombian civil society to keep the flame of peace alive. “I commend their efforts, and especially those of Colombian women who continue to work tirelessly to consolidate peace, and of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities who, even in the face of tremendous hardship, work for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.”

In reference to the 2022 electoral process, the Secretary-General trusts that Colombians and the country’s political leaders can recognise that achieving lasting peace can no longer be a source of disagreement. “Given the devastating human toll of more than five decades of conflict between the State and the former FARC-EP, it is a moral obligation to guarantee the success of Colombia’s hard-won peace,” concludes the Secretary-General.

Colombia's peace process is an example for the world

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

21 January 2022

Thank you Mr President.

First let me thank the Special Representative, for your briefing today and for the important work of the Verification Mission. I'd also like to thank our two civil society briefers Bibiana Peñaranda and Daniela Soto for sharing their perspectives and the powerful testimony you have given on the situation in Colombia.

Vice-President Ramírez, it's a pleasure to welcome to the Council once again; your presence demonstrates the importance your Government attaches to the Security Council's role in supporting Colombia on its journey towards lasting peace.

Mr President, next month we will be marking the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement. This is a significant milestone. We know that more than half of all peace agreements fail within the first five years. It is therefore an important moment for the international community to celebrate with Colombia the progress achieved to date, and the ways in which Colombia's peace process serves as an example for the world.

One such element is the novel transitional justice system created by the Peace Agreement, which puts victims at its heart. The United Kingdom commends the continued progress achieved in recent months by the components of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition. We reiterate our appreciation and support for the vital work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons, and we welcome the extension of the Truth Commission's mandate. We encourage all actors to play their part in this process: acknowledging their crimes and injustices, fulfilling their responsibility to the victims of the conflict, and paving the way towards reconciliation.

Another major achievement during this reporting period was the creation of 16 special transitional electoral districts for peace. The UK supports this important initiative to facilitate the political participation of historically excluded groups.

Mr President, while celebrating the achievement represented by the fifth anniversary of the Peace Agreement, it is also an important time to take stock of the challenges that remain to its comprehensive implementation and the commitments required to overcome them. The gains of the last five years cannot be taken for granted.

Foremost among these challenges, as all of us around this table have recognised before, is the high number of killings and threats against former combatants, social and environmental leaders, human rights defenders, women leaders and those from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Again, I recognise the testimony of Bibiana Peñaranda and Daniela Soto in this regard.

To end this ongoing violence, we urge the Colombian Government to further integrate its presence in conflict-affected areas, and strengthen the institutions that can investigate and prosecute the criminal actors responsible. We note with concern that the National Commission on Security Guarantees has not met fully during this reporting period, and call on the Government to make full use of this body, working with civil society, to develop a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups. We also call on all institutions to heed the early warnings of the Ombudsman's Office to help prevent attacks from happening and protect those at risk.

Finally, as the 2022 elections come into focus, we underline the importance of peaceful preparations and call on all parties to take steps to ensure safe and inclusive elections, and minimise the risk of pre-electoral and political violence.

Mr. President, the United Kingdom has been proud to accompany Colombia on its journey so far to implement the Peace Agreement. As we look ahead, we remain committed to supporting Colombia in consolidating the gains achieved and overcoming the challenges that remain.

In closing, I would like just to add that we look forward to beginning work shortly with other Council members on the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the Verification Mission.

Foreign Secretary Statement on the Colombian Peace Agreement
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
1 December 2016

On 30 November the Colombian Congress voted to ratify a new peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

I congratulate President Santos and the people of Colombia after this historic vote to endorse a new peace agreement that will benefit all Colombians. The agreement is the result of four years of often challenging negotiations between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Britain and Colombia share historic ties, common values and goals for peace and prosperity. We were delighted to welcome President Santos to the UK in early November for an official State Visit, during which the Prime Minister announced increased financial support for Colombia's peace process.

We will continue to support Colombia on its journey towards peace, and I encourage ongoing efforts to bring the benefits of peace to all of Colombia.

Home Secretary attends signing of Colombian peace deal

Home Office

26 September 2016

Home Secretary Amber Rudd will today join heads of state and senior representatives from more than 30 countries to witness the signing of a historic peace deal between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP in Cartagena, Colombia.

In her first official visit to Colombia, she will attend a ceremony at the San Pedro Claver church and the formal signing of the peace deal at the Cartagena Convention Centre. Representatives of the EU, UN, IMF and World Bank will also be in attendance.

The peace deal marks the end of over 50 years of internal conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC, a left-wing guerrilla group. This was the longest-running conflict in the Americas and claimed more than 220,000 lives.

Following 4 years of formal talks, the peace deal was announced on 23 August 2016. The Colombian government has announced that a public vote will be held on the deal in October 2016.

International support

The UK led on drafting a UN Security Council Resolution to secure international support for verifying a ceasefire. By the end of this financial year, the UK will have spent more than £10 million supporting post-conflict planning, security transition and justice reform in Colombia. This includes £4.2 million to the UN Post-Conflict Trust Fund.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I congratulate the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP on reaching this historic peace agreement. Colombia is enjoying its most peaceful period in more than a generation and the UK has consistently been a strong and proud supporter of the peace process.

We will remain a firm partner through the difficult period of implementing the peace accords, which matter not just for Colombia, but for regional stability. Britain is committed to helping Colombia confront any new threats that emerge. This will include through diplomatic channels at the UN.

We look forward to welcoming President Santos to the UK in November on the first-ever state visit to the UK of a Colombian head of state, as we continue to strengthen our cooperation on security, justice and trade.

6

PQs

Colombia: Internally Displaced People

24 Mar 2022 | 143562

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the implications for her policies of report by The Council for Human Rights and Displacement which states that 10,698 people were affected by mass forced displacement in Antioquia, Colombia, between January and November of 2021 with most victims being from the indigenous community.

Answering member: Vicky Ford | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The British Government remains concerned about reports of confinement and threats made against human rights defenders, social leaders and indigenous communities in Colombia. Colombia is an FCDO Human Rights Priority Country and UK ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues, as well as specific cases of concern, with the Colombian Government. Most recently, I raised human rights concerns when I spoke to Vice President Ramírez on 10 February. Officials from our Embassy in Bogotá also visited Antioquia to discuss security guarantees and preventive measures with different Government stakeholders to improve protection and security in that Department.

To date, we have spent over £68 million through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia and improve stability and security. Our funding is supporting the Colombian Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, transitional justice mechanisms, and strengthening the security and participation of communities in conflict-affected areas. We will continue to prioritise funding interventions to support at risk communities and victims, improve early warning and help tackle the root causes of the violence.

Colombia: Human Rights Abuses

19 Jan 2022 | 817 cc1642-6

Asked by: Baroness Blower

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Colombia about investigating human rights abuses, including killings, by police during the protests in that country in September 2020 and May 2021.

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

UK Ministers and senior officials regularly raise human rights issues as well as specific cases of concern with the Colombian Government. Most recently, on a visit to Colombia last November, the former UK Minister for Europe and the Americas, Wendy Morton, spoke to Vice-President Ramírez regarding the human rights situation. We look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any reports of excessive use of force against protesters and to take appropriate action against those responsible.

Asked by: Baroness Blower

I thank the Minister for his Answer. However, despite that engagement between the UK and Colombia, human rights abuses continue, including in November last year with the abduction and murder of a teacher trade unionist. Does the Minister agree that it would be proportionate to suspend the invitation to Colombia to join the UK-Andean trade agreement—a call made by the TUC—until police abuses and impunity are properly addressed? Will the Minister meet me, other concerned noble Lords and the TUC to discuss this matter?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I commend the noble Baroness for her efforts on the subject of Colombia—I know that she is very involved in it—and of course we would condemn any further abuses. Perhaps I may give a slightly longer answer on what the Colombian Government are doing—obviously, we are pushing them on this. The national police have opened 231 internal investigations against members of their own institution for alleged excessive use of force during the 2021 protests. Currently, 111 inquiries remain open and the rest are being closed. Six police officers have been sanctioned and two have been dismissed from the institution. The prosecutor's office confirmed that it had opened 200 inquiries for the alleged excessive use of force by the national police during the 2021 protests. Ninety-four disciplinary processes are currently under way and three officers have been prosecuted. It is fair to say that the Colombian Government are taking this seriously.

Asked by: Baroness Hooper

My Lords, the difficult situation in Colombia continues to develop. As migrants from across Latin America and indeed other parts of the world head north towards the United States, the almost impenetrable Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama is becoming a breeding ground for people traffickers, smugglers and other criminal networks. Given that our embassy in Bogotá is the largest in the Americas after that in Washington DC, can my noble friend encourage our embassy to take a lead in urging regional co-operation to support the Colombian Government?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I am very happy to reassure my noble friend on that basis. She will also be aware that the UK is the lead on the Security Council on matters regarding Colombia.

Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury

My Lords, I hear what the noble Lord said to my noble friend in respect of the actions of the police. Is he aware that members of the Colombian senate have warned that a new security law will further criminalise protests and weaken human rights protections? What discussions have the noble Lord's Government had with other Ministers in the Colombian Government on a new security law?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I cannot answer the noble Lord on that specific issue, but I can tell him that in the last three months there have been a number of high-level discussions between the UK Government and the Colombian Government. That includes a meeting in September last year between the Prime Minister and President Duque. I have already referred to the visit to Colombia by the Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas, Wendy Morton. As I say, there were a number of other recent interactions—I think there were about 10 between September and December. It is very much an open channel.

Asked by: Baroness Northover

My Lords, Global Witness reports that Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be an environmental activist—65 people were killed in 2020. Given that the FCDO oversees the climate fund, will the Government review environmental funding to Colombia to ensure that protecting environmental and indigenous activists is a key priority?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

My Lords, Colombia is one of our strongest partners on climate and the environment, with a leading regional influence and an ambitious nationally determined contribution of 51%. The UK-Colombia Partnership for Sustainable Growth, which was signed in June 2019, formalises the relationship between the two countries on clean growth and climate change. The reason I mention all that is because Colombia is a COP 26 priority country, and the UK has committed over £240 million of international climate finance in Colombia since 2011. We believe that the promotion of sustainable economic opportunities will help tackle some of the root causes of ongoing violence.

Asked by: Baroness Coussins

My Lords, during the 2021 protests, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights received over 60 reports of sexual violations allegedly perpetrated by the Colombian police, many in the context of arbitrary arrests. Given Her Majesty's Government's commendable lead on the prevention of conflict sexual violence and the forthcoming conference I believe we will be hosting on

this topic, have the Government raised these reports with the Colombian Government and if so, what has been their response?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I am afraid I do not know the answer to that question, but I go back to my earlier answer. The Colombian police and Government are investigating a large number of various allegations of poor behaviour and I will certainly take back the question and ask my colleagues.

Asked by: Lord Davies of Brixton

My Lords, I am sure the Minister agrees that full implementation of Colombia's historic 2016 peace agreement remains crucial but advocates for peace continue to face violence and intimidation. In December, a group calling itself the Black Eagles issued death threats against Colombian 5senators Iván Cepeda, Victoria Sandino and Maria José Pizarro and a number of civil society activists. Will the Minister condemn these threats and make representations to the Colombian Government over the safety of the named individuals?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

We should all condemn all threats to individuals in a functioning democracy. The UK has, as I said earlier, been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process which, as the noble Lord rightly points out, is five years old—indeed, Wendy Morton went to Colombia to celebrate the fifth anniversary. We commend the Colombian Government on their commitment to implement the 2016 peace accords and we have contributed more than £68 million in support through the UK's Conflict, Security and Stability Fund. We are the second largest donor to the UN trust fund for Colombia and, of course, we continue to raise these issues.

Asked by: Lord Purvis of Tweed

My Lords, political activism is one of the clearest examples of personal freedom. The BBC has reported that 145 activists were killed last year in Colombia. The Foreign Secretary says that British policies for trade and diplomacy are now combined to support personal freedom. Now that we have an independent trade agreement with Colombia, what discussions have we had with regards to the human rights and trade policy with that country to protect personal freedom?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I thank the noble Lord for his question. He may remember that my noble friend Lord Ahmad discussed this issue at length during a virtual visit to Colombia last year, including with the Government and members of civil society. We are taking forward their suggestions of further assistance that the UK could provide.

Regarding the trade relationship, I am sure the noble Lord is aware that we are on a bridging agreement at the moment. The Colombian Government—actually, it is the Colombian courts, not the Government—have not yet ratified the agreement. Continuity for the framework governing UK-Colombia trade is provided by this bridging arrangement but, of course, those matters are enshrined in the agreement for when it is signed.

Asked by: Lord Browne of Ladyton

My Lords, the UK has a long-standing £2.1 million training programme with the Colombian police. Not only did the December UN report into the April/May 2021 strike protest conclude that there was a

“unnecessary or disproportionate use of force by police officers”;

but Amnesty International’s November report into the protests found that the Colombian security forces, particularly the mobile anti-riot squad, inflicted more than 100 eye injuries with non-lethal projectiles in a pattern of deliberate behaviour that it concluded was intended to punish victims for

“exercising their legitimate right to social protest”.

After lots of requests for this, is it not time for a formal review of our continued support for the police training programme?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

My Lords, obviously we are aware of those reports of eye injuries. As I said earlier, all these things are being investigated. We have made representations to the Colombian Government as regards police activities but, in terms of our activities with the police, I assure noble Lords that everything that we are doing there is intended to support the development of civil society. I think it probably makes sense for us to continue to do that.

Asked by: Lord Monks

My Lords, the UK played a noble and honourable role in promoting the peace agreement. I want to return to the question posed by my noble friend Lady Blower. Will the Government agree to a cross-party meeting with interested Peers and others about what can be done now to make sure that the writ of the agreement runs in parts of Colombia where it currently does not?

Answering member: Lord Sharpe of Epsom

I thank the noble Lord for that reminder; I apologise for not answering the noble Baroness’s question earlier. I am happy to take that back and try to facilitate such a meeting.

Topical Questions

30 Nov 2021 | 704 c765

Asked by: Kate Osborne

Last Wednesday marked the fifth anniversary of the Colombian peace agreement, but human rights abuses continue at an appalling rate. Particularly worrying are the more than 100 instances of eye trauma, mostly people being blinded as a result of police firing projectiles at protestors during the national strikes earlier this year. What assessment has the Secretary of State made of the Colombian Government's investigations into this brutal police strategy against people who were exercising their democratic rights?

Answered by: Amanda Milling | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Colombia is an FCDO human rights priority country. We regularly raise human rights concerns with the Colombian Government and in multilateral fora. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton), visited Colombia last week and spoke to Vice President Ramírez about the human rights situation.

Harold Ordoñez Botero

22 Nov 2021 | 74020

Asked by: Rachel Hopkins

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment she has made of the (a) detention of the former FARC combatant and signatory to the peace agreement Harold Ordoñez Botero on 29 August 2021 and (b) implications for his ongoing legal security.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO is aware of the arrest, and subsequent release due to lack of evidence, of former FARC combatant Harold Ordoñez Botero.

The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, and supporting the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain a top priority. We will continue to support the Colombian Government's commitment to assisting former combatants in transitioning to civilian life, as agreed in the 2016 peace agreement. We have committed more than £68 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.

Colombia: Police

13 Jul 2021 | 29876

Asked by: Jamie Stone

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary on the Government's involvement in training Colombian police forces; and if he will publish the minutes of those discussions.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are not aware of such a meeting. The UK is committed to continuing its programming in support of peace, stability and security in Colombia to help implement the peace agreement and build a more peaceful and prosperous society.

The UK's CSSF-funded Colombia Peace and Stabilisation Programme launched the multiyear £2.1 million Police Innovations for Stabilisation in Colombia (SCIP) project in 2020. It is supporting the transformation of the Colombian National Police. The intervention aims to contribute to the modernisation 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. The project is being implemented through the International Organisation of Migration, which will design and deliver activities alongside the Colombian National Police at national and field level, with strategic support and advice from Police Scotland.

Colombia: Civil Liberties and Protest

13 Jul 2021 | 29875

Asked by: Jamie Stone

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has made to work with his international counterparts to promote civil liberties and encourage the right to protest in Colombia.

Answering member: 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. 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: Human Rights

12 Jul 2021 | 813 cc1535-8

Asked by: Lord Browne of Ladyton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made as to whether the reported killings of civilian protestors in Colombia has put the government of that country in breach of its commitments to respect human rights and democratic principles, as set out in the UK–Andean Countries Trade Agreement of 15 May 2019.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, the United Kingdom remains concerned about reports of human rights violations in Colombia and we have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors since the protests began. We welcome the Colombian Government's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of excessive force and to take appropriate action against those responsible. The British Government attach real importance to the principles underpinning the UK-Andean Countries Trade Agreement and expect our partners to do the same.

Colombia: Human Rights

12 Jul 2021 | 813 c1536

Asked by: Baroness Sanderson of Welton

My Lords, it is not just the reported killings that are cause for such concern but the return of another familiar tactic from Colombia's long civil conflict: disappearances. Human rights groups say that they have recorded up to 700 cases in recent months. What representations have the UK Government made to the Colombian authorities about this aspect of the protests?

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, I agree with the noble Baroness that it is important to focus specifically on the concerns that she has highlighted. We have made representations through ministerial engagement and regularly do so through our embassy on the ground. We continue to support transitional justice within Colombia as a key part of our work.

Colombia: Human Rights

17 May 2021 | 308

Asked by: Patricia Gibson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what diplomatic steps the Government plans to take in response to reports that human rights violations against the people of Colombia are increasing.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government remains concerned about reports of human rights violations in Colombia. We have raised our concerns with the relevant state actors over the past two weeks, and will continue to do so. Most recently, I spoke with acting Foreign Minister Adriana Mejía on 14 May to welcome Colombia's commitment to transparent investigations into allegations of abuse. We will continue to work closely with the UN Office of the High Representative for Human Rights in Colombia, and the wider international community to reduce tensions.

Colombia is a UK Government 'Human Rights Priority Country,' and we look to the Colombian authorities to investigate fully any excessive use of force, and take appropriate action against those responsible. The fundamental human right to peaceful assembly and association must be guaranteed.

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.

Answering member: 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.

Latin America: Future Foreign Policy

21 Apr 2021 | 811 c1838

Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury

My Lords, on 29 March, Carlos Vidal became the latest trade unionist to be killed in Colombia. At least 18 trade unionists were killed in 2020 and, according to the UN verification mission, a total of 133 human rights defenders were murdered. So what steps are the Government taking to ensure that the Minister's Colombian counterparts address this issue with a public policy to dismantle criminal organisations, including paramilitary successor groups, as stipulated by the peace agreement? Also, what is the Minister's response to the call for the Security Council, which is today considering Colombia, to create a group of technical experts to assist in that?

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

My Lords, the noble Lord is right to point out the challenges that remain within Colombia, which is an FCDO human rights priority country. Indeed, in my virtual visit, the issues that he raised were raised directly by myself with the Justice Minister of Colombia. In terms of the UN Security Council, the noble Lord is again correct. It is meeting today and will be hearing from the UN Secretary-General's special rapporteur, who will present her quarterly report. We will remain invested in Colombia, both in the peace process and in the defence of human rights.

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.

Answering member: 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: Peace Negotiations

18 Dec 2020 | 128618

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that the Colombian peace agreement is upheld.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has been a leading international advocate of Colombia's peace process, and supporting the Colombian Government in its commitment to implement the 2016 Peace Accords will remain an important priority. We have contributed more than £60 million in support via the Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund (CSSF) and are the largest donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. CSSF resources are targeted at accelerating the implementation of the peace accord, including support for the Government's rural development and reintegration programmes, and strengthening the participation of the communities in conflict-affected areas.

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 and stability in Colombia. Significant progress has been made on peace and security in Colombia in the past four years - whilst security challenges do remain, and will take time and resources to overcome, the situation has improved considerably.

Colombia: Peace Negotiations

15 Dec 2020 | 128225

Asked by: Lloyd Russell-Moyle

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what funding the Government has made available to support the implementation of the six chapters of the Colombian peace agreement signed in 2016.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has provided significant funding to support the implementation of the historic Peace Accords signed between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Since 2015, we have committed over £60 million through the Conflict, Security, and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF) to support the implementation of the peace agreement.

The UK is the largest single donor to the UN Trust Fund for Colombia. UK funding has included, but is not limited to, support for the Colombian institutions tasked with implementing and overseeing the different chapters of the peace agreement; supporting reintegration, rural development, and assistance to victims; the transitional justice mechanisms, including the work of the truth commission to gather testimony from Colombians in the UK; and a number of Colombian NGOs working on peace and stability.

Colombia: Peace Negotiations

28 Nov 2016 | 54623

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to his Colombian counterpart since the outcome of the Colombian Referendum on the Peace Process on 2 October 2016.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Prime Minister discussed the peace process with President Santos on 2 November, during the State Visit. The Foreign Secretary, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) also wrote to his Colombian counterpart on 14 November, following the announcement of the revised peace agreement. The Foreign Secretary welcomed the new deal announced by President Santos on 13 November and offered the UK's continued support to implement the peace process. The British Government welcomes the signing of the new peace deal on 24 November.

[Colombia](#)

14 Nov 2016 | 52472

Asked by: Kerry McCarthy

To ask the Prime Minister, what discussions she has had with President Santos of Colombia during her recent visit to the UK on (a) access to justice for victims of conflict-related sexual violence, (b) land restitution, (c) securing truth, justice and reparation for victims of conflict and (d) support for human rights and trades union activists in that country.

Answering member: Theresa May | Prime Minister

During the State Visit, I discussed the human rights situation in Colombia with President Santos, including reports of increased attacks against human rights defenders. The tenets of our relationship with Colombia are based on shared values of democracy, prosperity, and respect for human rights. President Santos and I reaffirmed this in the Joint Declaration which was issued following our meeting.

[Colombia: Armed Forces](#)

26 Oct 2016 | 49122

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with the government of Colombia on steps to integrate child soldiers back into that country's society.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Between 1999 and February 2015, the Colombian Government helped 5,730 minors to leave armed groups and rejoin Colombian society. The UK part-funds this process through the UN Trust Fund, to which the UK has given £4.2m. The UK welcomes the recent decision of the FARC that all minors would leave its camps. The UK is also helping to ensure that the needs of children are given consideration in the implementation of the peace accords. Through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, the UK funds a Colombian national expert to provide advice to Colombian Government negotiators on this issue.

[Colombia: Peace Negotiations](#)

21 Oct 2016 | 48477

Asked by: Catherine West

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support a peace process in Colombia.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK will continue to support Colombia in its search for peace. This includes working closely with the Colombian mission to the UN and other partners in the UN Security Council, where the UK secured unanimous support for two Resolutions on the peace process.

We have previously provided diplomatic, financial and technical assistance to peace-building, including advice from our experience in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Since 2015, we have spent almost £10m through our Conflict, Stabilisation and Security Fund supporting post-conflict planning, security transition and justice reform. This includes £4.2m to the UN Post-Conflict Trust Fund, as well as supporting the Organisation of American States monitoring mission on independent monitoring of conflict areas.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my Rt Hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Mr Johnson) congratulated President Santos following the award of the Nobel Peace Prize recognising the President's efforts to achieve peace for all Colombians. The upcoming State Visit of President Santos to the UK is an opportunity to advance our cooperation.

7

Debates

[UK-Andean Trade Agreement: Human rights](#)

02 Feb 2022 | House of Commons | 708 cc187-194WH

Motion that this House has considered human rights and the UK-Andean Trade Agreement. Agreed to on question.

[Colombia](#)

15 Jul 2021 | House of Commons | 699 cc214-238WH

Motion that this House has considered peace and human rights in Colombia. Agreed to on question. Sitting adjourned without question put.

[Colombia peace process](#)

18 Jun 2019 | House of Commons | 662 cc81-98WH

Motion that this House has considered the Colombia peace process. Sitting suspended without question put.

[Colombia peace process](#)

12 Sep 2018 | House of Commons | 646 cc337-359WH

Motion that this House has considered the peace process in Columbia. Agreed to on question.

8

Early Day Motions

Aerial glyphosate fumigations in Colombia

EDM 343 (session 2021-22)

20 Jul 2021

Tony Lloyd

That this House is concerned to learn that the Colombian Government plans to restart aerial glyphosate fumigations; notes the WHO's declaration that glyphosate is probably carcinogenic to humans; recalls that in 2015, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos suspended fumigations in favour of more effective strategies which would cause less harm to the environment and public health; is aware that numerous civil society organisations have been trying to block glyphosate use, a call echoed by seven UN Special Rapporteurs; is equally concerned that restarting fumigation would explicitly violate the 2016 landmark Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP); knows that the agreement specifies fumigation as a last resort that should only be used if the Colombian Government unable to strike deals with local people on crop substitution; believes that the crop substitution programme outlined in that Peace Agreement has been successful in destroying 45,000 hectares of illegal crop; regrets that only 7 per cent of families of the substitution programme have been financially compensated; questions whether aerial glyphosate fumigations would make a material difference to the supply of cocaine; and calls on the Government to make representations to the Colombian Government, urging them to reconsider their decision.

Unrest and human rights violations in Colombia

EDM 24 (session 2021-22)

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.

Colombian peace process

EDM 1660 (session 2019-21)

18 Mar 2021

Tony Lloyd

That this House is concerned by the intensification of violence in rural areas in Colombia, with 76 massacres and a 65 per cent increase in armed conflict in 2020, and against human rights defenders there, with Colombian defenders representing 50 per cent of the global total killed in 2020, which threaten to undermine the peace process; notes that communities on the Pacific coast of Colombia are experiencing a humanitarian and environmental crisis; further notes that Indigenous Peoples in Alto Baudó and other communities in Choco are increasingly caught in crossfire between illegal armed groups who are expanding their territorial control, forcibly recruiting children, perpetrating sexual violence, using antipersonnel mines and creating an atmosphere of terror; is also disturbed by reports of illegal gold mining in the Rio Quito region involving armed groups, which is exacerbating violence and resulting in biodiversity destruction; is alarmed by the death threat received in February by CAJAR lawyer, Sebastian Felipe Escobar, who spoke to UK Parliamentarians at an on-line event in June 2020, as well as by serious threats directed at other human rights defenders in Colombia; and calls on the Government, further to its responsibility as the penholder on Colombia, to request the UN Security Council to create a Group of Experts with technical expertise on organised crime to examine the impact of the illegal armed groups in Colombia and provide technical advice, in order to strengthen the work of the UN Mission of Verification in Colombia.

Implementation of the Peace Accord by the Colombian Government

EDM 150 (session 2019-21)

10 Feb 2020

Patrick Grady

That this House is concerned by the slow implementation of many areas of the Peace Accord in Colombia, including rural reform, crop substitution and victims' rights to justice which lie at the root of the conflict, as well as the often disproportionate use of force by officials in response to social protest; notes with alarm that areas vacated by the FARC have been filled by other illegal armed groups and militarised more generally, resulting in local

populations being marginalised and threatened; urges the Colombian Government to comply with Resolution 1190/2018 of the Ministry of the Interior when addressing social protest, to seriously consider making the National Police accountable to civilian authorities rather than the Ministry of Defence, to investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of on-going attacks and killings of social leaders and human rights defenders, and to implement all elements of the Peace Accord, as well as territorial development plans (PDETs); and calls on the Government to closely monitor spending by the Colombian Government of the UK's funding for the implementation of the Peace Accord, to continue playing a key role on the UN Security Council on Colombia, including with the Verification Mission, whose mandate should be renewed for a further three years, and to continue supporting the Colombian Government and civil society in fully implementing the Peace Accord to achieve a sustainable peace.

Inclusive peace and protection of defenders in Colombia

EDM 2232 (session 2017-19)

26 Mar 2019

Patrick Grady

That this House encourages further steps to be taken to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Peace Accord between the Colombian Government and the FARC signed in November 2016, including its gender-based agreements and prioritisation of victims' rights; recognises the vital role of civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the effective implementation of that Accord; is very concerned that 172 human rights defenders were killed in Colombia in 2018 according to the Colombian Ombudsman; notes also with concern the death threats against Zenú Indigenous leader Irrael Aguilar Solano and Human Rights Defender Danilo Rueda from the Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz; regrets that the breakdown of peace talks with the ELN guerrilla has increased violence against, and suffering in Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant rural communities and humanitarian zones, including in medio-Atrato Chocó, Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó, which are caught between neo-paramilitary groups and ELN guerrilla, and subject to threats and intimidation; urge both the Colombian State and the ELN to work towards a peaceful and negotiated solution to the armed conflict; and calls on the Government to ensure that the recommendations in the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders' 2019 report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders are incorporated into, and monitored by, the UN Security Council's Verification Mission to Colombia.

Colombian peace agreement

EDM 579 (session 2016-17)

19 Oct 2016

Robert Ffello

That this House welcomes the official signing of the peace agreement between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP and congratulates both sides on reaching this agreement after 52 years of conflict; recognises the ground breaking gender focus of the agreement and the transitional justice element which places the rights of victims at its centre; views with disappointment the result of the plebiscite; welcomes, however, the commitment of both parties to a lasting peace; wishes to show solidarity with the Colombian people who have been publicly demonstrating in such huge numbers in support of the peace agreement and their right to live in peace; further congratulates President Santos in winning the Nobel Peace prize; and highlights that this is awarded in international recognition of the efforts and commitment of the Colombian people and both the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP in achieving this agreement.

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