

Colombia (16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Letter Writing Action)**Brief Summary of the Issue:**

Civilians have been the main victims of Colombia's long-running armed conflict. Serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including systematic and widespread sexual violence against women and girls, have been perpetrated by all the warring parties. Millions of women, men and children have also been forcibly displaced, unlawfully killed, tortured and been victims of enforced disappearances. Between three and five million people have been forcibly displaced over the last 25 years. In 2010 alone more than 280,000 were forcibly displaced. More than 27,000 cases of enforced disappearance carried out during the course of the conflict are being investigated by the Office of the Attorney General, although the true figure is thought to be much higher. Civilians have not simply been "caught in the crossfire" but have routinely been directly and deliberately targeted. Moreover, the armed conflict is exposing women and girls, in particular, to gender-specific conflict-related sexual violence. The impunity for those responsible ensures that such crimes continue and enhances the terror these crimes generate.

The external report "*This is what we demand. Justice!*" *Impunity for sexual violence against women in Colombia's armed conflict* (AMR 23/018/2011), focuses on the obstacles girls and women face when seeking justice after experiencing rape and other types of conflict-related sexual violence. In the context of the internal armed conflict sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Impunity for such crimes has been a reality of the Colombian armed conflict for decades; this is particularly the case with conflict-related sexual crimes, which are committed by all the warring parties: guerrilla forces, paramilitary groups, often operating in collusion with the security forces, and the armed forces and the police. Impunity exists for numerous reasons, including the lack of political will on the part of successive governments to take decisive action to end conflict-related violence against women such as decisive action to dismantle judicial and other mechanisms which favour impunity; a lack of security for survivors and witnesses; an inadequate judicial system; and inadequate medical, psychosocial and financial support for survivors.

At the core of AI's strategy on Colombia is the aim of ensuring that the Colombian Government takes decisive action to fully implement repeated United Nations (UN) human rights recommendations, including on taking action to end impunity; on combating and dismantling paramilitary groups and breaking their links with the security forces; and on guaranteeing the safety of groups at particular risk, such as human rights defenders, Indigenous Peoples, and Afro-descendant and peasant farmer communities. This also includes a call on guerrilla groups fully, to uphold international humanitarian law.

Action: Send solidarity messages to survivors and women's NGOs in Colombia*Objectives:*

Support and continue to give visibility to the victims and survivors of VAW in the armed conflict and to those campaigning on their behalf in Colombia

Activities:

Send solidarity messages to the Colombian women's NGOs and the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence they are working with, who are facing threats because they speak out about sexual violence and campaign for an end to impunity for such crimes. The Colombia Team will collect solidarity messages received during the 16 days of Activism and sent them to Colombia so that they can be distributed among survivors and women NGOs across the country. The solidarity messages can be letters, postcards, video or voice messages. Please send the all of theses solidarity messages, including video and voice messages on CD Roms, DVDs, etc. to the Colombia Team at the IS in London. Please mark clearly what the envelopes contain.



**END
IMPUNITY
FOR SEXUAL
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN IN
COLOMBIA'S
ARMED
CONFLICT**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



In Colombia, women and girls have been subjected to wide-spread and systematic sexual violence by all sides in the long-running armed conflict, including paramilitaries, members of the security forces and guerrilla combatants. Almost all of the perpetrators enjoy impunity for their crimes.

Support and continue to give visibility to the victims and survivors of VAW in the armed conflict and to those campaigning on their behalf in Colombia. Sign the solidarity messages below to Colombian women's NGOs and the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence they are working with, who are facing threats because they speak out about sexual violence and campaign for an end to impunity for such crimes.

Mi nombre es _____ y vivo en _____ y quiero expresar mi solidaridad con las defensoras de derechos humanos en su trabajo en contra de la violencia sexual en el contexto del conflicto armado colombiano y las mujeres y niñas sobrevivientes que reclaman justicia en estos casos. Yo también exijo que se haga justicia

My name is _____ and I live in _____ and I want to express my solidarity with women human rights defenders in their work against sexual violence in the context of Colombia's armed conflict and the women and girls survivors who demand justice. I also demand justice.