

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AMR 23/040/2013
19 September 2013

Amnesty International cautions against measures that entrench impunity for human rights violations and stresses the importance of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in Colombia

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Colombia

Many states encouraged the peace talks currently taking place in Colombia.¹ These talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and possibly soon with the National Liberation Army (ELN), have indeed raised expectations that the long-running armed conflict could be coming to an end.

Amnesty International considers that an effective peace will necessitate a verifiable commitment from all parties to put an end to human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, and an effective strategy to bring to justice all those responsible for such abuses.

Although welcoming Colombia's support of recommendations to fight impunity, including by guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary,² the organization reiterates its concerns that legislation to broaden the scope of military jurisdiction and the legal framework for peace will seriously undermine efforts to combat impunity in Colombia.

Amnesty International has long highlighted Colombia's continued failure to effectively protect civilians caught in the conflict from serious human rights abuses by the security forces, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups, alike. In particular, the organization is dismayed at the high number of reported threats against and killings of leaders representing displaced communities and of those campaigning for land restitution. These reports demand immediate action by Colombia on the 13 recommendations - which the government notes are in the process of being implemented - to reinforce measures to protect human rights defenders, to investigate and prosecute all alleged human rights violations against them, and to enact legislation to recognize their legitimate work.³

The organization welcomes the support for the Office of the OHCHR in Colombia expressed by states during the review.⁴ The role played by the Office has been pivotal: over the years, it has saved many lives and supported the invaluable work carried out by human rights defenders.

¹ A/HRC/24/6, recommendations 116.7 (Dominican Republic), 116.8 (Bolivia), 116.9 (Pakistan), 116.10 (Cuba), 116.11 (Russian Federation), 116.11 (Costa Rica), 116.12 (Dominican Republic), 116.13 (Guatemala), 116.14 (Malaysia), 116.16 (Russian Federation)

² Ibid, recommendations 116.68 (Gabon), 116.69 (United Kingdom and Northern Ireland), 116.70 (France), 116.71 (USA), 116.72 (Argentina)

³ Ibid, 116.58 (Peru), 116.59 (State of Palestine), 116.60 (Trinidad and Tobago), 116.61 (Egypt), 116.62 (Cambodia), 116.63 (Honduras), 116.64 (Indonesia), 116.65 (Kyrgyzstan), 116.66 (Nigeria), 116.67 (Switzerland)

⁴ Ibid, paragraphs 116.35 (Slovakia), 116.41 (Sweden), 116.88 (Mexico), and 116.96 (Norway).

The Office will be equally critical, if and when a peace agreement is in place, by providing international scrutiny to ensure that human rights are respected, including the rights of victims to truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition. Its work will also be vital in the event that the parties to the conflict fail to reach an agreement.

Amnesty International is disappointed by the Colombian government's decision in July to renew the mandate of the Office for only one year, rather than the three years it had committed to during the review.

The organization hopes that next year the new government will demonstrate its openness to international accompaniment, during what could be challenging times, by renewing the Office's integral mandate, including observation, advice, technical cooperation and promotion of human rights, for at least a three-year period to enable it to effectively carry out its work.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Colombia on 19 September 2013 during its 24th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Colombia: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR23/005/2013/en/063df969-e4ce-4155-a9bb-aae9d0d610ac/amr230052013en.pdf>

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org

Field Code Ch

Field Code Ch