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Colombia: Ratification of the enforced disappearance convention, a positive yet incomplete step forward

Amnesty International welcomes the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by Colombia on 11 July.

However, it regrets that Colombia did not make the declarations recognizing the competence of the Enforced Disappearance Committee to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals claiming to be victims of a violation of the Convention. These declarations are of the utmost importance since the Committee cannot admit any case concerning a State Party that has not made such a declaration.

Although Colombia has already made enforced disappearances a criminal offence under national law, it has not yet done so with respect to crimes against humanity. Enforced disappearances that amount to crimes against humanity, that is, if they are systematic and widespread are, therefore, not a criminal offence under national law.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities to make all crimes against humanity an offence under national law, and ensure the full and prompt implementation of the Convention.¹

The use of enforced disappearances has for decades been, and still is, a pervading feature in Colombia's long-running armed conflict. Although accurate numbers are hard to establish, it is estimated that tens of thousands of people have been forcibly disappeared in the course of the armed conflict, principally by paramilitary groups and the security forces. Few of the perpetrators have ever been held to account for such crimes.

¹ Amnesty International has published a tool to assist states in implementing the Convention: *No Impunity for Enforced Disappearances: Checklist for the effective implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* (IOR 51/006/2011). This comprehensive checklist, published in November 2011, provides useful guidance on how to implement, in law and practice, the many obligations under the Convention and international law. This document is at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/IO51/006/2011/en/66282ecd-5087-4467-88a2-dc7709ae5755/ior510062011en.pdf>