

Press release

Human Rights Day 2017: little to celebrate in Colombia.

Brussels, 11 December 2017

On 10 December 2017, people around the world commemorated International Human Rights Day and the 69th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly. In Colombia, however, there was little to celebrate.

It is important to recognise that the Peace Agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Peoples' Army (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo - FARC-EP*) and the Colombian government was signed in November 2016 and has begun to be implemented this year. This is a fundamental step towards the achievement of peace and the full enjoyment of all human rights for Colombian citizens.

However, this implementation has been affected by the end of the *Fast Track* system on 30 November 2017. This system enabled faster processing of the laws needed to make the Peace Agreement a reality. One of the last laws to be approved under this system, on **the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), excludes human rights defenders** by prohibiting them from holding positions in this jurisdiction, thus contributing to the stigmatisation of their work.

Added to this stigmatisation is the **persecution and lack of protection faced by Colombian human rights defenders collectively**. They face constant threats, harassment and killings, and according to the We Are Defenders Program, these killings are on the rise. Between January 1 and October 30, 2017 there were 91 murders of human rights defenders, compared to 80 during the whole of 2016.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) assessed Colombia in September 2017 and noted in its concluding observations the **lack of guarantees for the application of human rights due diligence by companies; the need to comply with ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples; and the need to guarantee the full functioning of mechanisms and registers established for land restitution**.

In light of the above, ODHACO calls upon the European Union, its Member States, Switzerland and Norway to double their efforts to **contribute to the protection of human rights defenders in Colombia** and to support and monitor the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the recommendations of United Nations Committees. We also urge these members of the international community to **offer constructive and timely support and recommendations for Colombia's examination under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in May 2018**.

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