



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: THE PEACE ACCORD **THE ETHNIC CHAPTER AND DISMANTLING PARAMILITARISM**

Social leaders are crucial for guaranteeing that the 2016 peace accords are fulfilled so that Colombia is more peaceful, politically inclusive, and egalitarian.

President Iván Duque's government has undermined peace by exhibiting limited political will to advance its implementation, cutting needed funding and supporting legislative actions that would weaken core aspects of the accord, and weakening transitional justice.

Specifically, several aspects of the peace accords—essential to the work of social leaders—are under sustained pressure. It's critical that the international community pressure the Colombian government to strengthen them.

The Colombian government can support the grassroots work of social leaders by implementing the following key provisions of the peace accords:

THE ETHNIC CHAPTER

Afro-Colombian, palanquero, and Indigenous communities are the stewards of Colombia's biodiversity and rich mineral and natural resources. The 1991 political constitution recognized Colombia to be a pluriethnic society and paved the way for these communities to legally claim their collective land titles, as well as the right to free, prior, and informed consent on projects and policies affecting their territories.

COLOMBIA'S CONFLICT DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED AFRO-COLOMBIANS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Already affected by the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and structural racism, ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by internal armed conflict, violence, displacement and abuses. During the over fifty-year long conflict, entire communities were internally displaced by guerillas, the military, paramilitaries and/or economic and political interests interested in their lands and access to its resources and advance licit and illicit economies. They suffered irreparable harm through massacres and desecration of their culture and traditions.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE ETHNIC CHAPTER

In the early phase of the peace negotiations, it became obvious that neither the Colombian government nor the FARC guerillas recognized the historic, significant, and differentiated challenges faced by Afrodescendant and Indigenous communities. As such, the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous territorial authorities, grassroots, and victims organizations joined forces launching a global campaign to turn this around.

The result was the Ethnic Chapter, a transversal set of principles that guarantee that the entirety of the accord is implemented with a differentiated ethnic focus and the participation of these communities to guarantee its effective implementation in areas where these ethnic groups are present.

The Ethnic Chapter guarantees these groups right to previous consultation on peace-related efforts and backs self-protection mechanisms, including the Indigenous and Cimarrona guards needed to guarantee safety in the remote, geographically isolated areas where many of these communities live.

THE DUQUE ADMINISTRATION HAS IGNORED THE ETHNIC CHAPTER

The Duque administration has shown no interest in implementing the Ethnic Chapter. It has not advanced the High Level Ethnic Commission set up to monitor and apply the Ethnic Chapter, nor has it consulted with ethnic communities as it flirts with restarting aerial fumigation of coca fields.

Rather than advancing the protection mechanisms established in the accords, it has resorted to militaristic, hardline security approaches that failed in the past and that only puts these groups in further danger.

DISMANTLING ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS TO GUARANTEE A COMPLETE PEACE

To advance in addressing the targeted violence against social leaders, the Colombian government should dismantle the paramilitary successor networks which fuel violence against them. This should include doing the following:

- ◆ The peace accords created a body known as the **National Commission of Security Guarantees** (which is supposed to meet once a month to guide state policy on dismantling criminal groups; however, President Duque has convened it only several times). The Colombian government should set a deadline for the commission to develop and implement a plan to dismantle these illegal groups and protect communities, human rights defenders, and demobilized combatants, using the extensive input already provided by human

defenders and other civil society leaders during the four-year delay in implementing this crucial peace accord commitment.

◆ The Colombian government should ensure that the Attorney General's Office makes measurable advances in investigating and prosecuting not just those who carry out attacks against social leaders, but those who give the order as well. This means ensuring the Special Investigative Unit of the Attorney's General's Office **investigates, prosecutes, and dismantles paramilitary successor and organized crime groups**, which was the unit's original and still unfulfilled mandate (rather than limiting itself to investigating social leaders' murders without focus on dismantling the structures behind them).

Parts of this document are drawn from previous publications co-authored by WOLA and partners including the Latin America Working Group (LAWG): [Protect Colombia's Peace](#) (July 2020) and [a March 1, 2021 letter](#) by civil society organizations to the Biden administration.