

Colombia Action on

Published by the Colombia Support Network • Spring 2018



Delegation members from left to right: Conrad Weiffenbach, Eunice Gibson, Sarah Sasek, Jack Laun and Steve Bray.

CSN DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA

Nov. 7th to 18th, 2017

by Conrad Weiffenbach, Colombia Support Network, April 24, 2018

The delegation took place as the Colombian people and their government worked to implement the Peace Agreement (1) negotiated between The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian Government, for ending their destructive 50-year civil war (2). The Peace Agreement provides a remarkable plan for Colombia's future.

At the time of writing this report, five months and a Colombian Congressional election have passed since November 2017. Political parties tending to oppose the Peace Agreement have won the most seats in the Colombian Congress, portending a future for Colombia that was only

CSN Delegation to Colombia continued

latent in our November 2017 delegation experience. Presidential elections of mid-May, 2018 still lie in the future. Informal Summary of the Peace Agreement:

1. Comprehensive rural reform:
 - a) free distribution of land to people without or with insufficient land.
 - b) eradicating extreme poverty; reducing rural poverty by 50%.
 - c) reducing overall inequality for populations within 10 years.
 - d) programs dealing with hunger and malnutrition.
 - e) measures to strengthen local and regional food production and markets. (all to be carried out by the Colombian Government)
 2. Rights and Guarantees for exercising political opposition by parties & movements. (to be carried out by the United Nations, FARC, etc.)
 3. Ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and laying down of arms.
 4. National voluntary substitution for crops with illicit purposes.* (UN and FARC, Government)
 5. For victims of the conflict: systems of truth, justice and reparation. (Government)
 6. Monitoring of implementation and verification of compliance. (United Nations)
- (* In the Crop Substitution program (1,) coca farmers are to have payments by the government equal to what they

would have been paid for their coca, while instead they plant and grow food crops; and roads for transporting their new food crops to markets are to be constructed. This can be a sustainable way for Colombia to stop exporting cocaine without a need for spraying defoliants, and reduce rural criminality in Colombia substantially.)

Itinerary and Meetings of the CSN Delegation in Colombia:

Antioquia:

1. Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, Nov. 7 & 8.
2. Coronel Antonio Jose Dangond Culzat, commander of army 17th brigade, Carepa, Nov. 8.
3. Oscar Castano, Nov. 9, Medellin.
4. Army Major General Jorge Arturo Salgado Restrepo, Commander of 17th Division, Nov. 9, Medellin.

Putumayo:

5. Kamentsa Community of Sibundoy, Putumayo, Nov. 11 & 12.

Bogota:

6. Rector Juan Carlos Henao; Universidad Externado de Colombia, Nov. 14.
7. Francisco Ramirez; labor lawyer.
8. Alirio Uribe Munoz, Chamber of Representatives
9. Father Javier Giraldo, S.J., leading human rights advocate and founding

The Colombia Support Network *Action on Colombia*

Editor

Jack Laun

Contributors

Conrad Weiffenbach

Eunice Gibson

Jack Laun

Design

Randy Clark

Our wonderful volunteers

Emma Strenski

<http://colombiasupport.net/donate/>

Wicola/CSN is a 501(c)3

tax-exempt organization.

Your tax-deductible donation helps support our advocacy, education and people-to-people initiatives

patron of the Peace Community, CINEP; and William Roza, director of CINEP's data base.

10. Ana Teresa Bernal; founder of the human rights organization Redepaz and head of the displaced persons office of the Bogota government under Gustavo Petro.

11. Jahel Quiroga; attorney and human rights activist, Union Patriotica party.

12. Rafael Pardo; Minister of Post Conflict in President Santos' cabinet.

Action On Colombia is the official newsletter of the Colombia Support Network, a national peace and justice network of groups and individuals working to promote respect for human rights in Colombia and a just relationship between the United States and Colombia through grass-roots activism.

CSN supports a nonviolent, negotiated resolution to the conflict in Colombia.

CSN is the only current project of Wisconsin Interfaith Committee on Latin America

Colombia Support Network
P.O. Box 1505
Madison, WI 53701-1505

email csn@igc.org
www.colombiasupport.net

phone (608) 709-9817



13. Nancy Fiallo; human rights worker; monitors Colombian Supreme Court; supported the “Mothers of Soaxha.”

14. Todd Howland; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia.

15. Rodrigo Uprimny; University Professor, lawyer, writer about the Peace Agreement and transitional justice system.

16. German Romero, attorney for the Peace Community.

17. Marylen Serna Salinas; founder of the Campesino Movement of Cajibío, Cauca.

18. Liz Ramirez; US AID, Democracy & Human Rights, at the US Embassy, Bogotá.

DETAILS OF DELEGATION MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES IN COLOMBIA:

1, On November 8th at the Peace Community (3) of San Josecito near Apartado, the CSN delegation met with Germán Graciano, one of the Community leaders, in their palm-thatched meeting space. He reported



German Graciano, legal representative of the Peace Community.

that they are still much beset by abuses, threats, and theft by paramilitaries.

German also said they had recently discovered that some “persons” are now acting secretly as informers and agents for “outside interests” associated with local enemies of the Peace Community. In CSN’s information from the Peace Community since the November 2017 delegation, the paramilitaries have continued harassing, threatening and even trying to control sub-populations within the Community’s territory.

For a comprehensive list of human rights abuses at the Peace Community from Jan. to June, 2017, see pp. 37-43 of ref. (4.) Part of that list appears in the composite picture of Item #9 below (the meeting with Father Javier Giraldo S.J., a founding patron of the Community.)

2. In late afternoon of November eighth, the CSN delegation went to meet Colonel Antonio Jose Dangond Culzat, commander of army 17th brigade at his headquarters in Carepa, near Apartado. At the gate of the base we were told that Colonel Dangond was delayed by a big “drug bust,” and that Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos was visiting nearby on that occasion.

From newspapers (5) we later learned that twelve tons of high-purity cocaine had been confiscated from their underground hiding places in four different banana-growing fields near



Delegation members meeting at the Peace Community with two Community leaders.

continued on the following page

CSN Delegation to Colombia continued

Carepa, and several low-level persons involved had been arrested.

On April 17th 2017 Trump had met former Colombian presidents Álvaro Uribe and Andrés Pastrana at his Mar a Largo resort, unbeknown to the Colombian government (6.) The president had been accepting little foreign policy advice from his State Department, but he may have received a view of the Peace Agreement from those former Colombian presidents who oppose it.

In September 2017, President Trump threatened (7) that if the Colombian cocaine trade was not interdicted, Colombia would be decertified as a partner in the (old) war on drugs and US funding would be cut. Apparently gone was consideration for the Peace Agreement, its crop-substitution program and other features to sustainably eliminate coca farming from Colombia.

It wasn't long before Colombia responded: On October 5, eight unarmed coca farmers in a rural area near Tumaco were killed and many others injured by Colombian National police during a protest against the eradication of their coca crops and slow implementation of the crop substitution program (8, 9, 10.)

Then on November eighth President Santos came to Apartado to recognize and publicize the big cocaine bust.

Colonel Dangond finally arrived at his base in Carepa where the CSN delegation had been waiting for an hour or two. Because the 17th Army Brigade serves a region including the Peace Community of Apartado, the delegation was pleased to have his attention. The colonel acknowledged he is held responsible for the safety of the Peace Community. He showed us a large clip-ring binder of reports on all the events regarding the Peace Community he has



President Santos stands on 12 tons of captured cocaine

investigated since he began command of the brigade a couple of years ago, and he asserted he has found that the Community's versions of the events are all lies.

In response, the delegation reminded Colonel Dangond of proven army complicity in the massacre at Mulatos, February 21, 2005: Luis Eduardo Guerra-Guerra, one of the founders and leaders of the Peace Community, was murdered in an area near the Mulatos River and three children plus four other adults of the Community were massacred at the same time (7.) Then



Oscar Castano in Medellin.

after a decision on that massacre was handed down from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Colombian courts found several low-ranking officers of the 17th Brigade guilty and they are now spending time in prison. Although higher-ranking officers responsible in the chain of command have been charged and the prosecution continues, none have yet been convicted.

3. In Medellin on the way back from Apartado, the delegation met with Oscar Castano, a well-known Colombian TV journalist and old friend of CSN, who long has been investigating and reporting on corruption in Colombia - most recently on the trafficking of women. The latter report has resulted in serious threats to his life, and he asked if CSN could help him get the government to continue his protection.

Oscar Castano briefed the delegation about mysterious delays by certain Colombian government agencies in carrying out their responsibilities in the Peace Agreement. He speculated that various aspects of the implementation could favor one party or another in the national elections to come in March



Meeting of delegation members with Kamentsa leaders in their headquarters.

and May 2018. Moreover, if the parties supporting former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe (who opposes the peace agreement) win enough power, they would eliminate the Peace Agreement entirely from their government. Oscar Castano's perspectives later helped us to understand much of what we were to hear in remaining delegation visits.

4. At his headquarters in Medellin the delegation met with Major General Jorge Salgado Restrepo, commander of the 7th Army Division and reputed to have a bright future. He told us he believed the FARC had lost the military conflict. He also said (with no explanation) that troops under his command would be building rural roads. That road-building would fit with the program for facilitation of marketing new crops which campesinos have substituted for coca, but one could think supporting local contractors would be a better approach for building those roads.

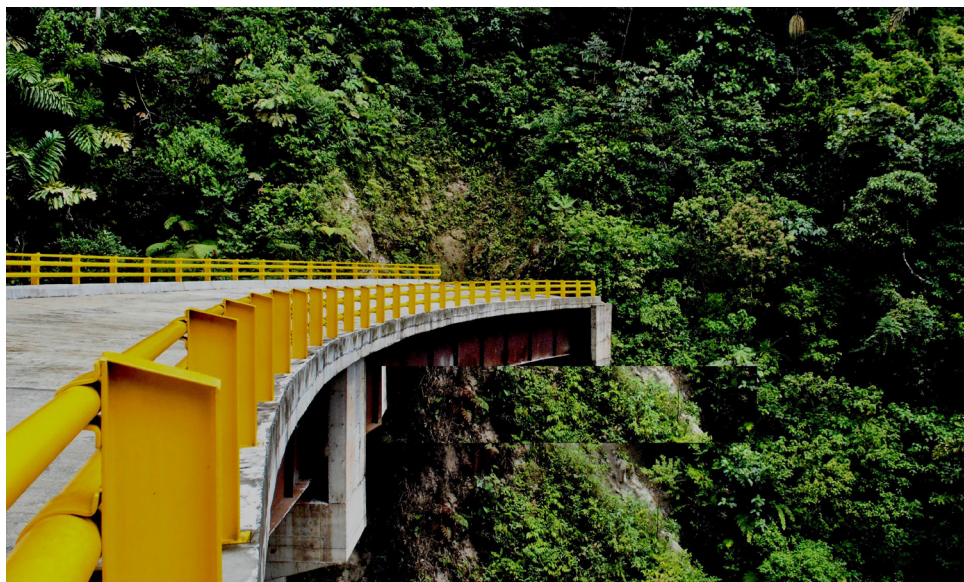
5. On the afternoon of November 9 the delegation flew south to the Putumayo Department, fabled for beautiful forests, waterfalls and wildlife. We stayed the night in Mocoa, and the next day after visiting in the area we were driven in a truck

through the Andes mountains on the infamous road to Sibundoy: 90 kilometers taking more than three hours of riding on dirt and gravel-surfaced switchbacks. In Sibundoy, the Kamentsa indigenous people invited our delegation to attend a meeting of leaders at their Community offices. After many had spoken to their group about various concerns, a candle ceremony followed.

Before our drive to Sibundoy, outside of Mocoa we found some construction of the "San Francisco to



Ceremony of Kamentsa with delegation members and remembrance of Cecilia Zarate-Laun.



The bridge to nowhere on the unfinished road (variante) between Mocoa and San Francisco.

continued on the following page

CSN Delegation to Colombia continued

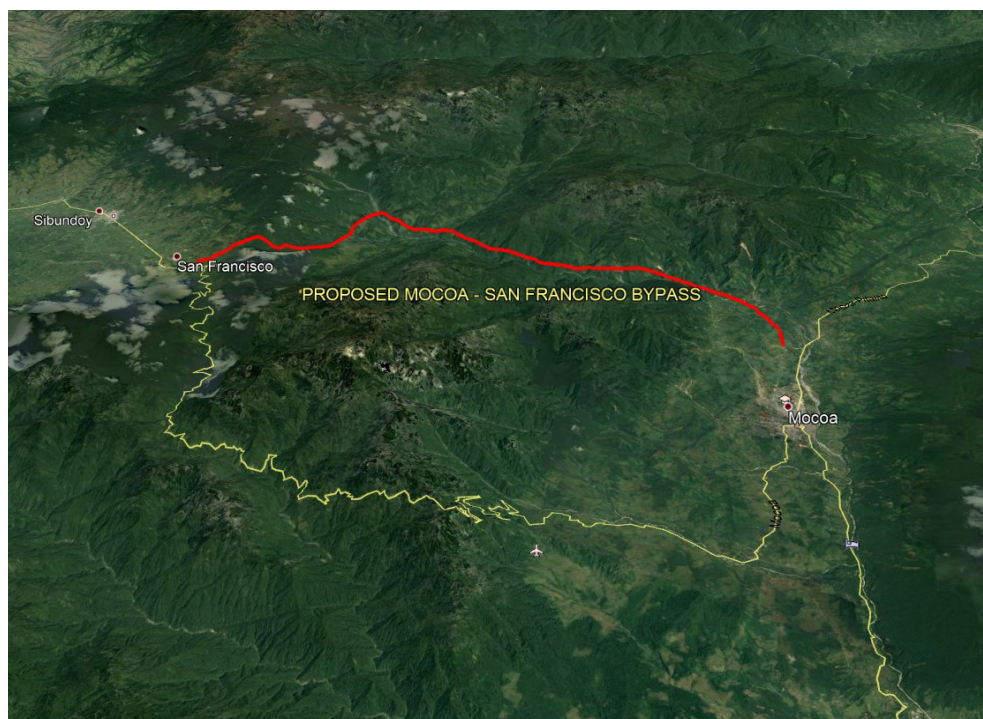


Photo-map showing the existing road and proposed route for the variante.

Mocoa Variante,” which is of concern to the Kamentsa and other indigenous groups: This future superhighway passes through indigenous territory of sacred importance and facilitates exploitation of the land for mining and other development. Funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Colombian government, the construction runs west along the Mocoa River through high Andes to the Sibundoy valley, as part of a safer, faster route planned for heavy commercial traffic. However, we could see that construction had been halted for many months.

On the Google-Earth map view, the current road from Mocoa to Sibundoy is indicated as a jagged yellow line at the bottom, and the planned “Variante” (in red) is part of a route from the Atlantic in Brasil, to Tumaco on the Pacific in Colombia. The bottom picture is from the current road, called the “trampoline of death.” The CSN delegation was driven that 90 km 3-hr

trip both directions in a truck, through cleared landslides (one visible in picture,) and past sites with memorials where people had died in accidents.



View of an avalanche on the old road.

6. Flying back to Bogota, the delegation met with the chancellor of the Universidad Externado de Colombia, Juan Carlos Henao, also a former President of the Constitutional Court which helped draft the Transitional Justice plan in the Peace Agreement. Juan Carlos eloquently outlined for us the progress being made implementing the Peace Agreement, saying it was going essentially as envisioned; the Congress passing and courts approving legislation necessary for the government to act.

7. The delegation had lunch at the university with Francesco Ramirez Cuellar, a lawyer and defender of human rights well known for his work with labor unions (as discussed in Eunice Gibson’s contribution to this CSN Newsletter.)

8. Congressional Representative Alirio Uribe, of the Polo Democrático (opposition party,) explained the politics of making laws through which the Peace Agreement may be administered



Congressman Alirio Uribe meeting with the CSN delegation in the Congress building in Bogota.

by the government. He outlined the pro- and anti-Peace Agreement political factions in the congressional and presidential elections coming March and May, 2018.

9. The delegation met with Father Javier Giraldo, S.J., a leading human rights advocate and tireless defender of the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado. He is affiliated with the Center for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), a Jesuit institution that catalogs the many human rights

abuses of Colombian campesinos and others in an on-line report (4.)

Fr. Giraldo repeated what we had already been hearing: that criminals are beginning to control the cocaine trade in areas which the FARC vacated when they demobilized, turned their weapons over to UN observers, and moved to the 26 rural veredas prepared for them. The criminals wanting to run the cocaine trade violently prevent campesinos from substituting other

crops for coca (5.) We also met with William Rozo, in charge of CINEP's Data Base, who gave all six CSN delegation members (including Beatriz, our American-Colombian translator) copies of the large-format, 300-page CINEP paperback, Data Bank of Political violence and human rights in Colombia; Noche y Niebla for Jan.-June 2017 (4.)

This huge and continuing cataloging of human rights violations, also on the internet, is one of the principal reasons why the rights of campesinos are not generally ignored by the Colombian Government, - which has agreed to the OAS Inter-American Convention On Human Rights, "Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica" (12.)

10. We met with Ana Teresa Bernal, a founder of the human rights organization Redepaz and head of the displaced persons office of the Bogota government under Gustavo Petro. An old friend of CSN's Cecilia Zarate, Ana Teresa seemed pleased to see Cecilia's work continuing with high spirit in this delegation.

11. The delegation met with Jahel Quiroga, an attorney and human rights activist with the Union Patriotica.

(Please see Eunice Gibson's article in this Newsletter for a summary of the threats to Jahel and this political party, which continues work of the party from which so many electoral successes were achieved in local governments some thirty years ago. - Following which, thousands of elected local officials from the Union Patriotica were assassinated.)

12. On November 15 in the Presidencia, Bogota, the delegation met with Rafael Pardo Rueda, Minister of Post-Conflict in Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos' cabinet. He was a student of Jack Laun's some 40 years ago, in a class on urban policy at the Universidad de los Andes, Bogota.



Rector Juan Carlos Henao meeting with the CSN delegation at the Externado University in Bogota, pictured with CSN translator/interpreter and delegation planner Beatriz Vejarano.

CSN Delegation to Colombia continued

The Center for Popular Research and Education (CINEP) is a non-profit foundation created by the Society of Jesus in 1972, with the task of building a more humane and equitable society through promotion of sustainable human development



DATA BANK AT "CINEP" IN BOGOTA

4. Persecución a comunidades de paz y zonas humanitarias

- El 2 de enero/17, en Buenaventura, Valle, cinco familias de la zona humanitaria del sector Piedras Cantán, La Playita, fueron amenazadas de muerte y obligadas a desplazarse por los reconocidos paramilitares albos "Wili", "Papa" y "Tito Rojas", quienes han actuado ya mucho tiempo bajo la mirada tolerante de Ejército y Policía.
- El 15 de enero/17 numerosos paramilitares "Autodefensas Gaitanistas" hicieron presencia en las veredas La Unión, Buenos Aires y Arenas Altas de San José de Apartadó, Antioquia, advirtiéndoles a los integrantes de la Comunidad de Paz que si no trabajan con ellos temen que abandonen la región. Ese mismo día amenazaron de muerte a dos miembros de la Comunidad de Paz de la vereda La Unión si se negaban a trabajar para ellos.
- El 16 de enero/17 paramilitares fuertemente armados irrumpieron en la vereda Las Claras de San José de Apartadó, Antioquia, desplazándose luego a la base militar del cuerno de San José donde se les vio depurando amigablemente con los militares allí acantonados. Ese mismo día en la página web del Comando de las Fuerzas Militares se informaba falsamente que la Comunidad de Paz trabajaba junto con los militares y ya no denunciaba nada.
- El 17 de enero/17 los paramilitares ocuparon viviendas de integrantes de la Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó, Antioquia, en la vereda Arenas Altas, y los amenazaron presionándolos a callarse y no denunciar nada, pues en caso contrario van a asesinar a los líderes de la Comunidad de Paz. Ese mismo día los paramilitares irrumpieron en la vereda La Esperanza perteneciente por RENEALDO AREIZA, advirtiéndoles que iban por la cabeza de él, pero no lo encontraron. Ese mismo día los paramilitares, junto con unidades de la fuerza pública, realizaron un evento en La Esperanza y anunciaron que pasaron una carretera, financiada por los paramilitares, por los predios de la Comunidad de Paz.
- El 19 de enero/17 un contingente de paramilitares irrumpió en la vereda La Resolana de San José de Apartadó, Antioquia; allí anunciaron que tienen el control de todas las veredas menos las de la Comunidad de Paz pero que tienen autorización para matar a quienes no se sometan a ellos. Afirman que no admitirán informantes sino solo los que ellos pongan. El mismo día los paramilitares se tomaron las veredas La Hoz y Redonali donde hicieron presencia ides paramilitares con los integrantes de la fuerza pública. También al día siguiente los paramilitares

<http://www.nocheyniebla.org/>



Rafael Pardo's portfolio includes managing the expenses envisioned for implementation of the Peace Agreement.

He mentioned six initiatives for the post-conflict government activity:

1) build 5,000 small (farm-to-market) roads in 15 years; 2) carry out a national land survey (catastral) program, at a cost of 7 billion dollars; 3) plans to modify and improve rural educational offerings; 4) carry out 1,200 small infrastructure projects in the next 6 months; 5) to remove land mines; and 6) to reduce the coca crop and improve removal techniques: to include reducing

coca crop growing by 50,000 hectares this year, and providing coca farmers with \$300 per month payments (about the same as they have been receiving for their coca production from those who buy the coca from them) for one year. He stated that the cost of these projects through the years would be \$40 billion. What he did not tell us is when the funds for these projects would be released, or why more funds had not been released by his office to date.

13. We met with Nancy Fiallo, a human rights worker who monitors developments in the Colombian supreme court, and has supported the

four "Mothers of Soacha" -of young men kidnapped, killed, and dressed as guerrillas, their bodies submitted to the Government for bounty, - in the army scandal known as the False Positives.

14. The delegation met with Todd Howland, UN High Commissioner to Colombia for Human Rights. He told us that per the Peace Agreement, a United Nations Mission was currently monitoring (among other things) reintegration of the FARC in the areas prepared for receiving them. He reported that the FARC had disarmed, demobilized and gone to their 26 assigned rural veredas. Then when



Meeting of CSN delegation with Attorney Jahel Quiroga at her office in Bogota, pictured with Sarah Sasek, Beatriz Vejarano and Steve Bray.

allowed to leave, 75% did so, probably going to their homes or relatives. He said few had received the cash promised them in the Peace Agreement as debit cards for adjustment to their new lives.

We asked about the possibility of a “plan B” to smooth the implementation of the peace agreements, in view of the problems we had heard so often about criminal groups having taken over the trafficking of cocaine grown in areas vacated by the demobilized FARC. Commissioner Howland pointed out that the planners of the agreement had contemplated using demobilised FARC, who could be quite effective helping the National Police and Army control criminals in their former areas, to enable the crop substitution program. However, that suggestion had been rejected during development of the Peace Agreements. Todd Howland has left Colombia since the CSN delegation met with him, ending his appointment as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia.

The Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Colombia for 2017 (13,) is based on the work of

Todd Howland and UN missions to Colombia for verifying and monitoring progress implementing the Peace Agreement. It’s a 20-page read that’s quite informative, and: “stresses the specific challenges in rural areas, including insecurity, violence linked to



Meeting of Post-Conflict Minister Rafael Pardo Rueda with CSN delegation in Bogota, pictured with Jack Laun.



U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Todd Howland.

illicit economic activities in the context of disputes between illegal armed groups and organized crime, particularly in the areas of former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army influence.

“The report also highlights the increasing attacks on human rights defenders, the impact of corruption on disparities in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and the difficulties of addressing multi-dimensional, decades old problems suffered by the rural communities.”

15. Rodrigo Upprimy, one of the most prestigious legal minds in relation to the Peace Process, met with the delegation at Dejusticia, an office of lawyers. He gave the delegation a considered view of possible scenarios for elections and their impact on implementation of the Peace Agreement. Unfortunately, we now know the Colombian Congress will have more representatives from parties opposing the Peace Agreement than those favoring it, and the prospects for realizing the Peace Agreement in Colombia have diminished.

16. The attorney for the Peace Community, German Romero, met with the delegation to explain the current situation regarding titles to the Community’s land. This is a timely matter in view of the Peace Agreement’s ambition to sort out titles to land for



Marylen Serna Salinas meeting in Bogota with CSN Delegation.

continued on the following page

CSN Delegation to Colombia continued

campesinos. He presented a professional discussion of how differing laws affect the Peace Community's claims to various parcels of the land they occupy.

17. The delegation met with Marylen Serna Salinas, a founder of the Campesino Movement of Cajibío, Cauca, and a national spokeswoman for campesino organizations. Because of her effectiveness through the years, serious threats have been made to her person.

Asked (as a metaphor) where she thought the campesinos might be in fifty years, after some discussion and based on her extensive experience organizing with them, Marylen said she "hoped they would be in the cities because there is simply far too little opportunity for them in their rural areas."

18. At the US Embassy in Bogotá, the delegation met with Liz Ramirez from US AID, Democracy and Human Rights. The question of how the US can help deal with problems implementing the crop substitution program was asked. She replied that the current strategy is "wholistic," without explanation. This could imply throwing every asset at the problem, which might include sending 80,000 Colombian soldiers to the areas vacated by the FARC (14,) where they could control the criminals who force coca growers out of the crop-substitution program.

The 2017 meeting of the CSN delegation at the US Embassy contrasts with the April, 2016 delegation meeting there, which was attended by the Human Rights Officer and five other staff working on the peace process. Then-President Obama had "promised to throw the White House's full support behind the Colombian government's efforts to sign a historic peace agreement with leftist rebels, including a pledge of \$450 million in

aid annually to help demobilize rebels who've been fighting an insurgency for 51 years" (15.)

The embassy staff reported to that 2016 CSN delegation they were planning for a large amount of US aid to Colombia in support of the Peace Agreement.

In March 2018, a \$1.3 trillion bill funding the US Government was passed by Congress, and it includes \$391 million in foreign aid for Colombia, which (before it passed) President Trump had been threatening to cut by \$140 million (16.) That Congressional Republicans passed this legislation indicates support for peaceaccord implementation, at least to Adam Isacson, of the NGO, Washington Office on Latin America (16.) However, Isacson's New York Times op ed, Colombia's Imperiled Transition (17) outlines several important factors now making implementation of the Peace Accord problematic, including that US funds cannot go to former

FARC members. Nonetheless, most of the government's responsibilities in the Peace Agreement involve programs for populations other than the FARC.

Conclusion:

If there is no US financial support for implementation of the Peace Agreement, or if a new administration not supporting it wins the Colombian elections in May, then there may be great disappointment among supporters of the Agreement, in Colombia and abroad.

In either case, the Colombia Support Network plans to follow events closely and continue to accompany our friends, including the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, in their efforts for peaceful

and sustainable development as near as possible to that envisioned in the Peace Agreement.

REFERENCES

1. National Government of Colombia. Bogotá, D.C., Colombia. (November 24, 2016).
"Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace" (in English June 20, 2017). [<http://especiales.presidencia.gov.co/Documents/20170620-dejacion- armas/ acuerdos/acuerdo-final-ingles.pdf>]
2. Lisa Haugaard. (2014). Latin America Working Group. "The Human Costs of the Colombian Conflict". [www.lawg.org/storage/documents/Col_Costs_fnl.pdf]
3. Comunidad de Paz de San Jose de Apartado. (2018). Colombia.
[<http://www.cdpsanjose.org/>]
4. Center For Popular Research and Education (CINEP). Banco de Datos de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política. Bogotá, D.C., Colombia. (September 29, 2017). "Revista Noche y Niebla N° 55" pp 37-43. [<http://www.nocheyniebla.org/>]
5. Reuters staff. (November 8, 2017). "Colombia seizes 12 tons of cocaine, its biggest ever haul". [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-drugs/colombia-seizes-12-tons-of-cocaine-its-biggest-ever-haul-idUSKBN1D9005>]
6. Franco Ordoñez and Anita Kumar. Miami Herald. (April 20, 2017). "Secret meeting at Mar-a-Lago raises questions about Colombia peace and Trump". [<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article145805169.html>]
7. Reuters staff. (September 14, 2017). "Colombia defends anti-drug efforts

after Trump critique”. [<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-colombia-drugs/colombia-defends-anti-drug-efforts-after-trump-critique-idUSKCN1BP1VV>]

8. Amnesty International. (October 6, 2017). “Colombia: The killing of peasant farmers in Tumaco underlines the need to implement the Peace Agreement”. [<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/colombia-asesinato-de-campesinos-en-tumaco-subraya-necesidad-de-implementar-el-acuerdo-de-paz/>]

9. Abby Martin. Telesur TV. (December 13, 2017). “The Colombian Government is Failing the Peace Deal”. [<https://videosenglish.telesurtv.net/video/692879/abby-martin-the-colombian-govt-is-failing-the-peace-deal/>]

10. Sibylla Brodzinsky. The Guardian. (October 9, 2017). “Colombia suspends police officers who fired into crowd, leaving six dead.” [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/09/colombia-suspends-four-police-officers-deaths-coca-farmers>]

11. Colombia Support Network. (June 26, 2005). “Massacre at Mulatos”. [http://colombiasupport.net/2005/6_26_rpt/san_jose_investigation.htm]

12. Organization of American States. (November 22, 1969). “American Convention On Human Rights “Pact Of San Jose, Costa Rica” (B-32)”. [https://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_b-32_american_convention_on_human_rights.pdf]

13. “Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Colombia for 2017”. (March 2, 2018). [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/.../A-HRC-37-3-Add_3_EN.docx]

RegularSessions/.../A-HRC-37-3-Add_3_EN.docx]

14. Reuters staff. (November 23, 2017). FARC dissidents face full-force of Colombia military: president. Reuters. [<https://in.reuters.com/article/colombia-peace/farc-dissidents-face-full-force-of-colombia-military-president-idINKBN1DO084>]

15. Franco Ordoñez. Miami Herald. (Feb. 4, 2016). “White House seeks to boost aid to Colombia to \$450 million”. [<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/colombia/article58540593.html>]

16. Jack Norman. Colombia Reports. (March 23, 2018). [<https://colombiareports.com/us-will-again-give-391m-in-aid-to-colombia-despite-trump-effort-at-cuts>].

17. Adam Isacson. New York Times. (April 5, 2018). “Colombia’s Imperiled Transition”. [<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/05/opinion/colombia-farc-transition.html>]

CSN DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA, NOVEMBER 2017

By Eunice Gibson

I thought I'd heard everything on my so-far 12 trips to Colombia, but this is the first time that, in less than two weeks, we met with six different people who are under active death threats. We even saw a professionally printed death threat on letterhead stationery!! What's going on?

On February 14, 2018 the respected Bogotá newspaper *El Espectador* headlined "Violence against political and social leaders has shot up in this election season". But the violence against political and social leaders increased right after the peace agreements were signed. When we visited the headquarters of Jesuit-sponsored CINEP (Center for Investigation and Public Education) on November 15, 2017, we were told that the number of murders of community and social leaders has actually increased, and the guerrillas can no longer be blamed, because they have turned over their weapons.

The article in *El Espectador* reports a total of 273 attacks on political, social and community leaders during 2017. Peace Brigades International reports that 205 community leaders have been killed since the beginning of implementation of the Peace Agreements. But that number changes every week.

The province of Antioquia, where the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó is located, reports the highest number of attacks. The Peace Community (see www.cdpsanjose.org) has received death threats for years, but when we visited the Peace Community on November 8, 2017, community leader Germán Graciano assured us that those threats had intensified, with

armed paramilitaries going from town to town carrying lists of members they plan to kill.

Just about seven weeks after our visit to the Peace Community, on December 29, 2017, paramilitaries actually barged into the Peace Community, armed with guns and knives, and tried to kill some members who were in a meeting. Only by quick action were the unarmed campesinos able to fight off the attackers and capture two of them. (See <https://peacebrigades.org.uk/news/2018-02-02/international-community-responds-attacks-against-peace-community-san-jose-de-apartado>)

Right after our meeting with Germán Graciano on November 8, 2017, we had an appointment with Colonel Dangond, Commander of the Colombian Army's 17th Brigade, responsible for the safety of the residents of the area. The meeting was extremely disappointing. Naturally, we expressed our concern about the threats, about the fact that armed paramilitaries were going around asking citizens to tell them where Peace Community leaders were, so that they could go and kill them.

But the Colonel told us, in so many words, that we didn't know what we were talking about. He laid out two huge 3-ring books where he said he had recorded every single complaint from the Peace Community, had investigated, and determined that each and every complaint was a lie! Of course we were not allowed to examine those books.

And the next day we met with Oscar Castaño, an investigative journalist who told us that he had received several death threats related to a report he had published on sex trafficking, a major problem in Colombia. He had asked the government for protection but so far had received no response.

On November 14, 2017, we met with Attorney Francisco Ramírez, a labor lawyer who has visited Madison several times. Labor lawyers have never been popular in Colombia and by 2015 there had already been eight actual attempts on his life. (See www.industrialunion.org/es/colombia-protejan-la-vida-del-activista-sindical-francisco-ramirez-cuellar) He's so dangerous because he sometimes wins cases against multinationals who cheat workers. When a multinational succeeded in overturning a regulation that helped workers with work injuries, Ramírez filed suit and won. The regulation was re-imposed. When laws drafted by multinationals are adopted, he has been able to get them overturned. Now he is working on election fraud. So the death threats continue.

On that same November 14, we were lucky to be able to spend some time with Fr. Javier Giraldo, the Jesuit who helped organize the Peace Community and continues to support it. Once back in 2010, I was walking on a street near our hotel in Bogotá when I saw a huge billboard with the message "Muerte al cura comunista!" ("Death to the communist priest") That was nothing new for Fr. Giraldo. The threats continue. He told us he had spent half of last year in the area surrounding the Peace Community and he was not able to perceive any control of the many paramilitaries in the area. He says they use informants and they have moved into campesino organizations. He is concerned that the government is not fulfilling important parts of the peace agreement and is not supporting efforts to promote democracy. Instead, community leaders are being murdered.

On the next day, November 15, we met Attorney Jahel Quiroga. She

runs a human rights law firm and she represents families and survivors of the Patriotic Union genocide. In 1984-1985, the Colombian government made peace with guerrillas who called themselves the “Union Patriótica” (UP). The agreement allowed them to take part in politics, and they began to win local offices. Then the killing began and more than 3,000 of them were murdered. She warns that that could happen again if attacks on community leaders cannot be controlled. “Then,” she said, “the guerrillas might return to the jungle.”

Attorney Quiroga showed us the letter she received, neatly typed on AGC (Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces) stationery. The letter demands that she and others stop any kind of “leftist” activity. If they don’t, the letter says, they need to shop for a funeral home.

This wording is interesting, because the Colombian government continues to insist that the “criminal gangs” like the AGC are just apolitical narcos. But this printed death threat is clearly political.

Finally, we met with Marylen Serna. Marylen is a founder of the campesino organization Movimiento Campesino de Cajibío (MCC) and is also the national spokesperson for the Congreso de los Pueblos and helped organize the Marcha Patriótica. She has been in Madison to report on her organizing work. We had read press reports about a terrible kidnapping, torture and sexual assault against a close associate of hers. The perpetrators made clear that they intended the violence as a threat against Marylen. She told us that new threats are being made all the time, but she keeps on.

Quite recently the Colombian government has indicated that it

intends to do more to protect human rights defenders, but every week or so, there are new murders. It was disappointing when on December 16, 2017, Colombia’s Minister of Defense told a radio interviewer that the murders are not systematic or organized and that the “great majority” of the murders are “because of boundary disputes or ‘womanizing’”.

As we ended our meeting with Germán Graciano in the Peace Community, we asked him, “What can we do to be of help?” He replied instantly, “Keep coming.” So that’s what we plan to do and we hope that Colombia Support Network members and friends will want to come along with us.

The Plan for Peace of the Santos Government and the Obstacles to Achieving a Lasting Peace: Observations Drawn From the CSN November 2017 Delegation

By Jack Laun

In many respects the effort to end civil conflict in Colombia still depends upon solutions to problems which Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan confronted before his assassination on April 9, 1948. Very unequal division of property in rural areas; a general lack of presence of the government and government services in those areas; and a clientelistic structure for local authorities.

Colombian Labor Attorney Francisco Ramirez began to discuss the prospects for a lasting peace in Colombia by reciting the fact that 71% of Colombia's people live in poverty. Meanwhile, multinational businesses pay little or no tax to the Colombian government. For example, he said, in a recent year the owners of the Cerrejon mine---the largest open-pit coal mine in the world when it was built over 20 years ago---paid nothing in taxes to the Colombian government, while receiving about \$300 million back from the government. Drummond, a U.S. coal company, paid no taxes while receiving payments totaling more than 1 billion dollars in credits.

Meanwhile, Congressman Alirio Uribe of the Polo Democratico Party told us that opposition parties in the

Colombian Congress, led by the party of former President Alvaro Uribe Velez, are trying to sabotage the Peace Process. Implementation of the provisions of the Peace Agreement between the Santos Government and the FARC guerrillas has been haphazard, while plans for resettlement of demobilized FARC fighters have not been carried through adequately.

Father Javier Giraldo, who has courageously spoken out for the Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado and other campesino communities, told us that paramilitary members have been integrated into rural communities, where they will be informants. He said that the Peace Accords do not effectively touch the roots of the conflict in Colombia, by not resolving the very serious problem of access to land for most Colombians in rural areas. Only a very small percentage of those who were forced off their lands by paramilitary and guerrilla forces have had their lands restored to them.

We met with Minister of Post-Conflict Rafael Pardo, who outlined the Government's plans for achieving peace in the countryside. He said they plan to build many farm-to-market

roads to provide access to markets for campesinos' crops. And they will try to reduce coca growing by paying those who transition to legal crops a sum of money similar to what they have received from those involved in the drug trade, which he said they calculated at about \$300 per month, during the transition period. He also said the government proposes to reduce the coca crop by 40% within a year, through support for alternative crops and through cutting down coca plants in the fields in which they are being grown (but not through forced eradication by aerial spraying with glyphosate (Round-Up Ultra), which the Santos government discontinued for health reasons).

A fundamental problem with this plan is a lack of adequate resources to carry out the plan, as Todd Howland, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, told us. Since our meeting with Commissioner Howland allegations of misuse of funds by an assistant of Minister Pardo have cast further doubt upon the successful implementation of coca crop substitution and a productive alternative to coca growing. As many as 75% of the demobilized FARC guerrillas may have

left the 26 zones where they were sent after turning in their weapons to United Nations personnel, Mr. Howland noted,

Attorney and Law Professor Rodrigo Uprimny, who has worked to defend and improve the legal elements of the peace process, identified in a meeting with us at his office in Bogota the following problems: 1) a lack of strong support for the Peace Process; 2) the structural problem of the Government's lack of control in many parts of Colombia; 3) lack of implementation capacity of the government---safety and a reduction in violence have not been as good as had been assumed---which might even lead some elements of the FARC to again take up arms; 4) the economy has declined, leaving the government fewer resources for the Peace Process than it had expected to have; 5) The coca crop has expanded, and President Trump has called upon Colombia to resume aerial spraying of the coca fields, which the Santos government ended in response to health concerns; 6) the Colombian Congress has passed measures eliminating some of the persons chosen as judges in the transitional justice system.

In short, the Peace Process, and with it improvement in the precarious

situation of many campesino and other families, is not at all assured of success. We can hope that political leaders will work to save the transitional justice system and lay the groundwork for a lasting peace in Colombia, but none of this is assured at this time, with Presidential elections set for May 27, just a few days away.



Wisconsin Interfaith Committee on Latin America, Inc.

Colombia Support Network

P.O. Box 1505

Madison, WI 53701-1505

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
Madison WI
Permit No 440

You do make the difference!

Become involved in ending horrible human rights abuses in Colombia.

I would like to become a member of
the Colombia Support Network

☐ ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$25 REGULAR/\$15 LOW INCOME

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE/FAX _____

EMAIL _____

Please make checks payable in \$US to WICOLA/Colombia
Support Network. Donations are tax deductible.

I am interested in volunteering by:

☐ STARTING A CSN CHAPTER IN MY LOCALE

☐ GOING ON A DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA

☐ TRANSLATING/INTERPRETING

☐ HELPING IN THE OFFICE

☐ SETTING UP A TALK AT MY SCHOOL, GROUP, OR CHURCH

☐ PARTICIPATING IN CSN STUDY GROUPS

I am sending a donation of p \$25 p \$50 p \$100 p other

☐ Check ☐ PayPal

NAME _____

ACCOUNT _____

EXPIRATION DATE _____

SIGNATURE X _____