

39th Session of the Human Rights Council

Agenda Item 6, UPR Outcomes: Colombia

Organisation: Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Speaker: Claire Denman



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free to believe

Thank you Mr President,

CSW welcomes the Colombian government's efforts regarding the peace agreement so far. However, there remains a long way to go before the peace process is complete.

Changes to the original peace agreement, which stated that all those under investigation would be judged under equal conditions, are both a concern and a potential setback to peace. There are concerns that hostilities may resume, including by individuals who have left the illegal armed groups, because of a belief that the Colombian government is reneging on its commitments under the agreement.

The presence of other illegal armed groups in areas previously controlled by the FARC, are slowing down the implementation of the peace process.

Death threats as a method of intimidation are commonly used by illegal armed groups. While in some areas the number of killings has gone down, giving the impression of improvements in the security situation and greater stability, in reality the illegal armed groups' strategies have changed in many of these territories, with an increase in extortion and other threats.

CSW welcomes the numerous recommendations calling for increased protection of human rights defenders and community leaders, we strongly encourage the inclusion of religious leaders in these calls.

Communities in rural areas continue to face forced displacement and violence at the hands of illegal armed groups. CSW echoes Italy's recommendation to intensify government presence in these areas to ensure the protection of these communities and also welcomes Azerbaijan's call for the safe and dignified return of all forcibly displaced individuals.

CSW condemns restrictions affecting indigenous people who convert away from traditional religious beliefs and who are subsequently often forcibly displaced from their indigenous communities or excluded from receiving certain benefits by indigenous authorities.

CSW urges the Colombian government to recognise the rights of indigenous peoples and to put in place legislation that will protect the right to freedom of religion or belief for all Colombians, including those living on indigenous lands.

It is of vital importance that the Colombian government meets the expectations of these recommendations. CSW therefore calls on the international community to assist the government of Colombia in achieving this wherever possible.

Thank you