



Foreign &
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Ms Louise Winstanley
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12/11 November 2016

Dear Ms Winstanley,

Thank you for your letter of 25 October about the recent State Visit of President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia.

The State Visit, which took place from 1-3 November, was an important and historic event for both the UK and Colombia. I am glad to hear that Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials nominated you to meet President Santos at the Guildhall Banquet.

The UK and Colombia work closely together to strengthen human rights. Our support focuses on improving access to justice, protecting human rights defenders, and preventing sexual violence in conflict. We have committed over £2 million to human rights projects in Colombia since 2011.

Our close relationship with Colombia allows us to have frank and full conversations on difficult subjects like human rights. The State Visit was no exception. Civil society representatives participated in a number of events during the visit, including at the London School of Economics and at Parliament. President Santos referred to the benefits peace will bring in protecting human rights in his address to Parliamentarians, and discussion of human rights featured strongly in the bilateral meeting between the Prime Minister and President Santos. The President referred specifically to human rights defenders, acknowledging that while the number of attacks against them had decreased dramatically, the level of threats they received continued to be high. Following this meeting, the Prime Minister and President issued a Joint Declaration that reinforced the tenets of the bilateral relationship, which is based on 'shared values of democracy, prosperity, and respect for human rights.' President Santos' visit to Belfast was an important opportunity to learn from the experiences of peace-building in Northern Ireland. As part of this, President Santos held a private meeting with community leaders in Belfast involved in peace-building at a local level.

The UK will continue to reiterate our support for human rights. We will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including Colombian ministries, local communities and Non Governmental Organisations on a variety of themes, including conflict sexual violence, and human rights defenders.

Yours sincerely,
Jacqueline Anelay

RT HON BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHNS DBE

Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the UN

Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict