

PRESS RELEASE

Colombian Women Peace Trailblazers visit London

17 Nov 2017 – On 24 November 2017 is the first anniversary of the Colombian Peace Accord. The Colombian peace deal is the first in the world to seriously address women rights. Colombian women are visiting the UK to urge the international community to put their political weight behind them and ensure this Peace Accord is fully implemented. Historically, hard-won achievements by women in Peace Accords have failed to be implemented.

“97% of Peace Accords worldwide have seen only around 15% of their agreements implemented; we are determined to ensure the Colombian Peace Accord is fully implemented.” said Colombian Human Rights Defender Rosa Emilia Salamanca.

Colombian women, who were some of the key players in achieving these gender-sensitive agreements and will be the key actors in ensuring their implementation, will be in London between 20 and 26 November to take part in an [international conference organised by ABColumbia](#).

“The challenge is to ensure the implementation of the gender agreements in the Colombian Peace Accord. Given the horrendous abuses committed against women during the conflict, respect for women’s rights will be a key indicator to measure change in peace building.” said Louise Winstanley, Programme and Advocacy Manager, ABColumbia.

A recent survey by Oxfam and other Colombian organisations found that between 2010 and 2015, 400 Colombian women a day suffered gender-based violence.¹ Linda Cabrera, a Colombian Lawyer working for the feminist organisation SISMA Mujer will be in the UK for ABColumbia’s conference. Linda Cabrera and SISMA MUJER were prime movers behind lobbying the Peace Negotiators on how gender-based violence in the conflict should be treated in the transitional justice system. The group called for and achieved “no amnesties” for conflict related sexual violence.

“In the first phase of the peace negotiations, sexual violence was not recognised as a crime committed in the context of the armed conflict and directly related to the war. We achieved an important result for the victims, whereby now sexual violence is recognised as such and will be prosecuted [in the Transitional Justice System] as one of the most serious crimes committed in the context of the armed conflict.” said Linda Cabrera.

“Colombian women do not want to see the important gains they obtained on gender violence, equality, land rights and political participation in the Peace Agreement disappear or fail to be implemented.” said Janneth Lozano, Director of the NGO, CODACOP.

“ABColumbia is calling on the international community to monitor the implementation of the agreements from a gender perspective. The UK has a lead role on the issue of conflict sexual violence and we are calling on them to support women victims and women’s organisations by closely monitoring the full implementation of the Colombian Peace Accord.” said Louise Winstanley, Programme and Advocacy Manager, ABColumbia.

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For press interviews:

For interviews with Louise Winstanley or any of the Colombian women activists listed below, please contact Communications Coordinator **Irina Muñoz** at assistant@abcolombia.org.uk ; Landline: 0207 870 2217 or UK mobile phone number: +44 (0)7522 329 258.

Background notes

- **Rosa Emilia Salamanca:** Executive Director of the Corporation for Research, Social and Economic Action (CIASE) in Colombia, a Colombian peace-building NGO that works to defend women's rights. Rosa Emilia is a human rights defender who has dedicated herself to strengthening the participation of women and civil society in peace and decision-making processes in Colombia. She played a vital role in the creation of a gender sub-commission in the peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC.
- **Edilia Mendoza:** Leader of the Platform of Rural Women in Colombia. She has recently been elected to the newly formed High-Level Women's Sub-Commission in the Commission for the Monitoring, Promotion and Verification of the Peace Agreement (CSIVI). Edilia has suffered attacks on her life on several occasions from far-right groups (paramilitary groups), as result of the work she is undertaking. Despite these attacks, she has determinedly and with commitment continued her work to build sustainable peace in Colombia. As a member of the National Association of Peasant Unity and Reconstruction, she tirelessly works to achieve agrarian reform, emphasizing the importance of including the need for women to have equal rights to land in such reforms. As a member of the Commission of the Platform for the Political Advocacy of Colombian Rural Women, she promoted the creation of the Rural Women's Directorate in the Ministry of Agriculture.
- **Linda Cabrera:** Colombian lawyer, coordinator of the area of Justice and Non-violence, and Deputy Director of the Corporación Sisma Mujer. Linda is the co-author of the Cinco Claves report with proposals on how to address gender-based violence in transitional justice agreements. In 2016, Linda presented these proposals to the negotiators in Havana.
- **Janneth Lozano:** Director of the Grassroots Community Support Corporation (Codacop). She works with indigenous communities in Colombia to economically empower women so that they can enjoy autonomy over their lives and resources. She started working with indigenous women at a time when there was hardly any concept of indigenous women holding and claiming individual rights. Janneth recently participated in a UN Women event in New York, "Voices on Gender Equality from CSW: Civil Society meets the Press", as part of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Her work contributes towards Sustainable Development Goal 8, which promotes sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all, and SDG 5, on gender equality and empowerment of all women, including women's equal rights over resources.
- **Lida Emilse Paz:** Indigenous leader from the Nasa ethnic group, which inhabits the territory of North Cauca to the southwest of Colombia. A victim of the armed conflict, Lida Emilse has become an activist for peace and an authoritative human rights defender, for the rights of women and indigenous peoples. She initiated an advocacy process with indigenous women on their rights to land and territory, and promotes the demilitarization of indigenous territories in northern Cauca.
- **July Fajardo:** Research coordinator at the Women, Peace and Security Observatory of the Organisation Corporación Humanas Colombia (Humanas). Humanas monitors compliance of the Colombian State with Resolution 1325, conducts psychosocial and legal accompaniment of women victims of conflict-related sexual violence, and is part of the Alliance of Cinco Claves ("Five Key Points"), which wrote the report with proposals on how to address gender-based violence in transitional justice agreements. She has advocated for the inclusion of the gender focus and the rights of women victims in the Havana peace process, and currently in the process of implementation, particularly in relation to transitional justice.
- **Louise Winstanley:** Programme and Advocacy Manager of ABColombia. She is the main organiser of the international conference on 22 November and the author of the report "Colombia: Women, conflict-related sexual violence and the peace process", available on the [ABColombia website](http://www.abcolombia.org.uk).

- **ABColumbia:** ABColumbia is the joint advocacy project of five leading British and Irish organisations with programmes in Colombia: CAFOD, Christian Aid UKI, Oxfam GB, SCIAF and Trócaire. Amnesty International and PBI are observers. ABColumbia members work with over one hundred partner organisations in Colombia. Many of ABColumbia partners are local and national women's organisations and human rights defenders working specifically on issues impacting Indigenous, Afro-Descendant and peasant farmer communities. ABColumbia has been working with women's organisations throughout the Peace Talks to support ethnic leaders and civil society organisations to achieve a gender focus in the Peace Accord.
- **FARC:** Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army) is the largest of the guerrilla groups in Colombia, which has now been demobilised as a consequence of a landmark Peace Accord with the Colombian Government in 2016. They have since formed a political party
- **“Colombia Securing Peace: Women's Achievements and the Challenges Ahead”:** is a full-day public conference with Colombian women activists, international policy-makers and experts organised by ABColumbia in association with the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF). It will take place on 22 November 2017 at the Senate House. Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State, will be one of the keynote speakers. The full conference programme and list of speakers can be downloaded from [ABColumbia's website](#). Conference tickets are available through [Eventbrite](#). Please contact Irina Muñoz (contact details below) if you are interested in a free press pass for the day.

ⁱ Survey of the Prevalence of Sexual Violence against Women in the Context of the Colombian Armed Conflict 2010-15
<http://bit.ly/2xPzyyL>