

Press Release

For immediate release

Colombia heads to presidential run-off in one of the most consequential elections in recent history

London, 17 June 2026 — As Colombians prepare to vote in the second round of the presidential election this Sunday, **21 June**, the outcome is expected to shape the country's approach to peace, human rights, security and environmental policy for years to come.

Polls point to a close race, leaving the outcome highly uncertain. The leading candidates, **Iván Cepeda** of the left-wing *Pacto Histórico* (Historic Pact) and **Abelardo de la Espriella** of the right-wing *Movimiento de Salvación Nacional* (National Salvation Movement), present sharply contrasting visions for Colombia's future. Their respective platforms diverge significantly on key issues including security, the implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord, poverty reduction, economic policy, human and environmental rights — all of which have profound implications for conflict-affected communities, rural leaders and the country's long-term stability.

“The harsh and personally destructive language used during this election campaign has left Colombia dangerously divided. Whoever wins the presidency will need the courage and political intelligence to unite Colombian society and build alliances in Congress; otherwise, the gains of the 2016 Peace Process will continue to be eroded.” *Louise Winstanley, Programme and Advocacy Manager, ABColombia*

The election comes at a pivotal moment as Colombia approaches the tenth anniversary of the **2016 Peace Accord** in November. Armed criminal and guerrilla groups, that remained active after the signing of the Accord, have expanded significantly under the last two presidencies, as they compete for control of illicit economies, strategic territories and communities. This poses significant challenges for the incoming government.

“Colombia has the obligation to guarantee all people the effective enjoyment of their fundamental rights, without discrimination, barriers, exclusions, or unjustified restrictions. Within this framework, the comprehensive protection of communities, social leaders, human rights defenders, and former combatants in the process of reintegration is a priority for consolidating peace, democracy, and social justice.” *Gerardina Cardozo Aragón, Social Ministry of the Diocese of San Vicente del Caguán (FUNVIPAS).*

Colombia stands at a critical crossroads. The next government will determine whether Colombia can be brought back from its current trajectory of increasing violence and turn a corner to deliver on effective governance, stabilise the economy, tackle violence against women and marginalised groups, and invest in social development and strong state institutions in rural areas.

Widely recognised by international experts as a roadmap for sustainable peace, the full implementation of the 2016 Peace Accord will require strong political leadership, strategic alliances in Congress, a more unified society, and the financial resources needed for its full implementation.

For media enquiries, interview requests or further information, please contact:

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Available for interviews

Louise Winstanley: Programme and Advocacy Manager for ABColombia since 2010, with over two decades of experience working on human rights, peace issues and sustainable development in Colombia.

ABColombia, is the joint advocacy project of a group of five leading UK and Irish organisations with programmes in Colombia: The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Oxfam, the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) and Trócaire. Founded in 1997, ABColombia's purpose is to influence decision makers in the UK and Ireland and through them, international decision makers, with a view to resolving the human rights and humanitarian crisis in Colombia and achieve a lasting peace and equitable and sustainable development. ABColombia advocates in favour of human and environmental rights, peace, justice and sustainable development, women rights and equality, and the rights of marginalised communities.

Two Leaders from the Colombian Amazon will be in the UK between 29 June and 3 July 2026

Following the announcement of the results of Colombia's Presidential election on 21 June two Colombian community leaders **Gerardina Cardozo Aragón and Luz Tania Ruiz Cardona will be on a speaking tour in the UK, between 29 June and 3 July, and available for interview on these dates.** They can offer first-hand perspectives on how the outcome may affect women, peacebuilding efforts, human rights, environmental protection and communities in conflict-affected regions.

Gerardina Cardozo Aragón: Colombian Human rights defender and church leader with over 25 years' experience in the Colombian Amazon. She works with the Social Ministry of the Diocese of San Vicente del Caguán (FUNVIPAS), supporting communities affected by violence and environmental degradation, promoting victims' and women's rights, reconciliation, and environmental protection.

Luz Tania Ruiz Cardona: Human rights defender working with the Social Ministry of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Leguísimo. She supports rural communities through projects focused on sustainable livelihoods, Amazonian biodiversity, and strengthening local economies.

Notes to editors

- **ABColombia** is the joint advocacy programme of CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, SCIAF and Trócaire. It provides analysis and information on Colombia to the UK Parliament, the Irish Dáil, the European Union, the United Nations, and the media.
- **FUNVIPAS** works with communities affected by Colombia's armed conflict, focusing on environmental protection, reforestation and youth leadership.
- The **Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Leguísimo** works alongside rural, riverine and indigenous communities in the Amazonian region of Putumayo, Colombia to promote sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection.