

briefing

Colombia

CSW advocacy visit to Colombia

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VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

PO Box 99, New Malden,
Surrey KT3 3YF

T: 0845 456 5464

E: admin@csw.org.uk

W: www.csw.org.uk

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 281836

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1. Participants

Anna-Lee Stangl	CSW Research and Advocacy – Latin America
Simon Coveney	TD and Member of the European Parliament
Michael Gowen	European Commission ¹
Simon Walsh	Latin Link
Ricardo Esquivia	National Director; Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace (CRLP) of the Colombian Council of Evangelical Churches (CEDECOL)
Pedro Acosta	Political Advocacy Coordinator; CRLP of CEDECOL

2. Itinerary

8 January	Arrival in Bogotá
9 January	Cartagena
10 January	Sincelejo
11 January	Santa Fe de Ralito and Tierra Alta
12 January	Bogota
13 January	Medellín
14 January	Departure

3. List of Meetings

Cartagena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of the Regional Government of Bolivar • Ombudsman’s Office for Bolivar • Local Church leaders
Sincelejo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Church leaders • Representative of the Regional Government of Sucre • Ombudswoman for Sucre • Priest working in the Montes de Maria • CRLP staff working on religious liberty issues
Santa Fe de Ralito:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 08” – Demobilised Paramilitary Commander
Tierra Alta:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to displaced community of Nueva Esperanza (New Hope)
Bogota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Francisco Santos • Church leaders and representatives of the CRLP from the Central Region, including Bogotá, Santander, Caquetá, and Arauca - included

¹ visiting Colombia in a personal capacity, not on behalf of the EC

	testimonies of two minors who had fled to a safehouse in Bogotá after guerrilla groups murdered 6 of their family and attempted to forcibly recruit them
Medellín:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francisco Galán, spokesperson for the ELN • Local church leaders and representatives of the CRLP Advocacy team for Antioquia and Choco

4. Objectives of Visit

- a) To obtain an overall perspective concerning the current human rights and humanitarian issues in Colombia by speaking to regional and local government representatives, church and civil society leaders, regional ombudsmans' offices, victims of human rights violations, as well as representatives of some of the armed actors currently involved in peace initiatives, including paramilitary and guerrilla (ELN) groups;
- b) To explore possible ways in which the international community, and particularly the European Parliament, can constructively engage with the Colombian government and civil society, to support a process that will lead to real and lasting peace in the country;

5. Executive Summary

Over the course of the week in Colombia, two important issues emerged as particularly urgent. These were mentioned consistently and as a matter of serious concern by civil society leaders in every region visited by the delegation, by some government officials, and by representatives of the armed actors. They are also, perhaps not surprisingly, two of the most complex issues facing Colombia and it is clear that there are no easy solutions. However, it appears that formulating an effective response to these problems would take the country much further along in efforts towards establishing a lasting peace with justice.

Demobilisation

While everyone with whom the delegation met, including some who were initially critical of the proposal, said that they supported the idea of demobilisation of armed actors, there was, (with the exception of some regional government officials) almost unanimous condemnation of government failures to follow up and offer support to demobilised members of paramilitary units. Many pointed to the murders of some demobilised paramilitary soldiers and the re-arming of others as evidence that the whole process had been "improvised," in the words of one official. While some programmes had been set up to offer training and education to the demobilised and to assist in the process of reintegration into Colombian society, it appears that these were not implemented uniformly in every region where demobilisation took place. In addition, many of the programmes were actually forced to close due to a lack of resources.

This has negative implications in a number of areas. The first is that it is clear that many members of demobilised paramilitary groups are now forming new armed groups and resuming illegal activity, including narco-trafficking and extortion. The irony is, now that most of the high level paramilitary commanders are in prison, these new groups are fragmented and lack discipline and structure, making it far more difficult to identify and

negotiate with the leaders. This has led to increased instability and an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in these regions.

Many Colombians also pointed out that the government's failure, or inability, to protect not only demobilised paramilitary soldiers, but also the lands which were previously under their control has caused other armed groups who have not yet entered into peace negotiations to question whether or not it is really in their interests to do so. Paramilitary groups that were not part of the peace negotiations with the AUC and leftist guerrilla groups, the ELN and FARC, are observing this process, and unfortunately have not been convinced that the government has the will or the ability to negotiate in good faith. It is imperative that, if the government wishes to persuade these groups to commit to a negotiated peace, it demonstrate both its will and its ability to fulfil its commitments and obligations in the current process. Unfortunately, the delegation encountered a high level of pessimism throughout the country and among the various actors, regarding the current process and the likelihood of its success.

6. Internally Displaced

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre puts the number of internally displaced in Colombia at up to 3.7million. Although the government has committed support to IDPs and promised to assist them in returning to their homes, the reality is that current levels of aid and support are nowhere near sufficient. Corruption on the regional and local levels often ensures that what aid is allocated at the national level often disappears before it ever reaches its intended recipients. In addition, the escalation of violent conflict, particularly in the southern part of the country, and continued insecurity in regions where paramilitary demobilisation has taken place, as outlined above, mean that it is impossible for many of the displaced to return to their places of origin. Adding to the crisis, many international agencies that would normally offer additional assistance to IDPs have had to pull out of insecure areas; unfortunately, these are precisely the regions where there are often the highest numbers of new IDPs fleeing recent violence, those most desperately in need of assistance.

Because of their desperate situation, it is often these communities that become recruiting grounds for the armed groups, including violent street gangs, and narco-traffickers who offer a livelihood to young men and women who have few other opportunities. This of course, adds fuel to levels of violence and instability, again, making the establishment of a just peace even more elusive. It is clear that the government, with the aid of the international community, must make protection, support and aid for IDP communities a priority. Education, vocational training and employment opportunities are all critical. Protection for communities that wish to return to their places of origin must also be guaranteed when return is possible.

Over the course of the meetings, it became clear that the disenfranchisement of 3.7million Colombians has a direct impact on their treatment by the government, particularly at the local and regional level. Re-registration procedures are complex to the point of being impossible and it does not appear that the government makes any attempt to encourage IDPs to register and exercise their right to vote in elections. Were procedures changed to make the process more straightforward and simple and if internally displaced adults encouraged to vote, this could have the effect of making their local and regional elected officials more answerable to these populations. This would of course, be a motivational factor in encouraging these officials to be more responsible with and accountable for aid allocated by the national government and aimed at helping IDP populations.

7. Recommendations

The delegation urges the international community and particularly the European Union to

- Support the current peace and demobilisation process, particularly in terms of increased support and monitoring of follow-up support to men and women who voluntarily demobilise to help them successfully re-integrate into society
- Insist on accountability on all levels, national, regional, and local, particularly in relation to EU aid meant to provide humanitarian aid and support to the internally displaced
- To continue to explore ways of channelling EU aid both for IDPs and to the programmes for the demobilised through non-governmental civil society groups while continuing to insist on accountability
- Strongly encourage the Colombian government and those armed actors with which some EU countries have channels of communication to commit to a negotiated end to the conflict and to respect human rights and humanitarian principles

The delegation urges the Colombian government to:

- To convene the National Council for Peace, as required by Colombian law, in order to ensure that all actors in Colombian society, particularly those from civil society, are given a voice in the search for peace with justice.
- Continue to work towards peace through negotiations with the various armed groups
- To increase its aid to the internally displaced and most importantly, to ensure that local and regional governments are held accountable for funds and other forms of aid to IDPs channelled through their offices and agencies
- To ensure that IDPs receive aid and support not only in sufficient amounts but also for longer periods of time, recognising that most of the internally displaced in Colombia require aid for longer than the current limit of six months, and that real efforts are made to help IDP adults to find viable forms of employment and IDP children to continue their studies
- To make certain that IDP communities that wish to return to their places of origin are allowed to do so under conditions of adequate security – and to guarantee them the legal rights to the lands that they fled
- To reform voter re-registration processes in order to ensure that IDP populations are enfranchised and can exercise their right to vote in local, regional and national elections and referendums
- To allocate sufficient resources for effective follow up support to those members of the armed groups that agree to demobilise as part of the peace processes and to engage with civil society groups to create holistic programmes to assist the demobilised in the re-integration process.

8. Summary of Meetings

8.1. Cartagena

In Cartagena the delegation's first meeting was with a representative of the Ministry for the Interior of the Regional Government for the Department of Bolivar, where there has historically been a strong paramilitary presence and which has been one of the central sites of the demobilization of paramilitary forces as part of the peace process. The government representative emphasised the successes of the programme, stating that the mayors and local governments of each municipality in Bolivar had reported to him that "everything was under control" in their areas and that there is essentially no more problem. He did express concern that a number of the demobilised have been murdered across the country and thus far the authorities have not been able to ascertain who is responsible for the murders, nor

the reasons behind the killings. He emphasised the importance of international support for these initiatives and expressed the hope that Simon would be able to raise awareness of the work being done in Bolivar and encourage more support for the projects.

After the meeting with the regional government, the delegation visited the Ombudsman's office for the Department of Bolivar. The situation in the department as described by the representative was markedly different from that which the regional government had presented. He did, however, agree with the regional government in the need for international support and assistance and expressed the hope that the delegation would raise these issues internationally. The representative stated that the office was inundated with requests by citizens for action and investigations against local government officials and members of the paramilitary groups (both demobilized and active). He explained that the role of the Ombudsman's office is only to investigate and publicly denounce alleged crimes, and then must turn over the cases to local authorities if the case warrants a judicial process. The representative was not as optimistic as the regional government representative had been, and did not agree that everything in Bolivar was "under control". He alleged that some paramilitary groups are still active, and that many that did participate in the demobilisation process are now re-mobilising because of a lack of follow-up and support from the government. He also expressed concern about the murdered demobilised paramilitaries and felt that it was indicative of a lack of transparency and support in the process.

Our final meeting of the day was over lunch with local Christian leaders working with the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace on social initiatives and advocacy. The city of Cartagena is the second largest "receiver" of internally displaced persons in the country (after Bogotá). Although there are official networks and organisations that exist to offer support to these IDPs, the reality is that a significant percentage of the IDP population does not benefit from these initiatives. The church leaders also expressed their concerns about the demobilisation process and the lack of follow-up support and help with reintegration into society from the government.

One of the church representatives explained how proud she is to be a Colombian, and how difficult it is for her to criticise her own country, but that as a mother and as a Colombian she felt she had to be honest in pointing out that the root of all the problems in her country was the endemic corruption and violence that permeate every aspect of society from the government structures to the family home. While specifying that she was not speaking in her capacity as a "church leader" but rather as a mother and as a Colombian, she stated her belief that real change will only ever come to Colombia when Colombians themselves are transformed, and men and women are willing to put Christian principles of truth, integrity and justice into practice at all levels of society.

8.2. Sincelejo

The delegation spent one day in Sincelejo, the capital of the Department of Sucre, which is also a centre of paramilitary activity. Elected government officials from Sucre, at national, regional and local levels were recently arrested after hard evidence came to light demonstrating that many were in the pay of paramilitary groups. The investigation continues, and it is likely that more will also be arrested. This has not come as a surprise to most of those living in the department, as cooperation between government officials and the paramilitaries has long been taken for granted. The arrests, however, have come as a surprise, and many are wondering what impact these investigations, and a harder line from the national government will have on the region.

While in Sincelejo, the delegation visited the national office of the Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace, where an exchange of views was held with about 20 Christian

leaders from around the region. These men and women voiced concerns about the demobilisation process that echoed many of those the delegation heard the previous day in Cartagena. While they welcomed the idea of demobilisation itself, as a good thing, they felt that the government had been deficient in the follow up and that as a result many of the participants in the demobilisation process were returning to violence, either because they were not sincere in the first place, or because their efforts at reintegrating into society had not been successful.

Some of the leaders work regularly with demobilised young men and explained the struggles they have faced in attempting to reintegrate. Most, they said, have not been able to find any kind of viable employment and as a result, some have joined up with “private security groups” – which are little more than re-formed armed groups. They voiced the concern that the demobilisation process was “improvised” and that the government had not had a well-thought out plan for follow up and support.

The group also expressed their concern at the lack of support for IDPs in the region. A number of the leaders pointed out the dramatic difference between the amount of resources allocated to IDPs and the amount given to demobilised paramilitaries. While demobilised paramilitaries receive a monthly stipend (of about \$155), IDPs are only eligible for a very minimal amount of aid for three months, which can be extended for another three months if needed. However, after the six months of aid, the support is ended and they are no longer eligible for state aid. They said that many of the IDPs with whom they work are aware of the financial support given to demobilised paramilitaries and have the perception that the government is “rewarding” them for having participated in violent activities.

Simon Coveney explained that Ireland had also gone through a very painful peace process, where some ideals had had to be sacrificed. He pointed out that while this was, of course, unfair, the government had to give some kind of incentive to paramilitaries to demobilise to make up for the living they were giving up. The church leaders agreed that this was true, but felt that greater efforts could be made to support IDPs, offering aid and help with employment and education – and eventually, when it is safe to do so, with returning to their original homes.

After lunch with the church leaders, the delegation visited the offices of the regional government for the Department of Sucre. Unfortunately, the governor was away and the Minister for the Interior, who was supposed to meet the delegation, had suddenly fallen ill, so the delegation met with one of his staff and the government official responsible for the internally displaced. The Ministry of the Interior representative gave a brief outline of the issues in the region and said that while there had been some problems with demobilised paramilitary soldiers, for the most part it had been a great success. When asked about government collusion with the paramilitaries, he said that he, of course, was not aware of any cooperation and it was important to remember that those elected officials who were recently arrested had not yet actually been found guilty by a court of law.

The government representatives were keen to present a “successful” project aimed at supporting IDPs. They explained that the project had involved building houses for 40² families (out of a displaced community of 200) who were originally displaced in 2003. They said that they hoped to replicate this project with other IDPs in the future.³

² According to a UN report released in June 2006, there are an estimated 60,000 IDPs in Sincelejo. According to the report, in the preceding year, Sincelejo received double or triple the number of IDPs from the previous year.

³ Unfortunately, after the delegation left the meeting, it was informed that, probably due to corruption, a high percentage of the houses that had been constructed for the 40 families did not have roofs – and the project had actually been abandoned by the government.

Simon Coveney asked the government representatives about how local officials ensured that IDPs exercised their right to vote in local, regional and national elections, stating that if IDPs had some voting power, government officials would feel more of an obligation to respond to their particular situation. The government representatives conceded that this is, in fact, a huge problem and that very few IDPs are registered to vote in receiving regions. They blamed complicated re-registration procedures that make re-registration almost impossible as well as a lack of awareness among the IDP about how to do this. They admitted that the government could make more of an effort to encourage and support them re-registering. Coveney pointed out that in the current situation, politicians had no incentive to look after the concerns of IDPs and that making sure they were allowed to the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote in elections would do much to empower these communities.

The following meeting was at the regional Ombudsman's office. As in Cartagena, the picture described by the Ombudsman's office differed significantly from that painted by regional government officials. The Ombudsman's representatives outlined many of the same concerns that were presented by the Bolivar Ombudsman's office, namely a lack of follow up support for demobilised paramilitaries, leading to an upswing in targeted violent activity after an initial lull and a lack of attention to the situation of IDPs.

She also emphasised the serious problem of corruption which, she said, pervades every level of society, and has, in fact, become the norm. She explained that a lack of employment, and low pay, even in professions like law and medicine, force many people to choose between participating in corrupt practices and living at or below subsistence level. She also thanked the delegation for visiting and stressed the importance of international attention and support for the peace process and for human rights and justice issues in Colombia. The delegation assured her that these issues would be followed up in Europe.

8.3. Santa Fe de Ralito

The delegation travelled by car to Santa Fe de Ralito, within the confines of the paramilitary concentration zone which was created as part of the peace process with the government. While most of the paramilitary commanders who have signed up to the terms under the Peace and Justice Law are now in prison, awaiting possible eight-year prison sentences, the demobilised commander the delegation met with, known as "08" or "*El Diablo*" (The Devil), is still resident in Santa Fe de Ralito. Over a two hour period, "08" outlined the major grievances that the demobilised paramilitaries have against the government, which, he said, they feel has betrayed them. He pointed out the neighbouring buildings where the terms of peace and demobilisation were negotiated and agreed upon. They have been burnt down, apparently in an act of protest at the government's behaviour.

Echoing many of the concerns the delegation had heard in Cartagena and Sincelejo, "08" strongly criticised the demobilisation process, and particularly what he considered to be a total abandonment of the demobilised by the government after they had participated in the ceremonies and handed over the weapons. He pointed out that in demobilising these men had given up their livelihood and now had nothing to show for it. There had been no serious or consistent effort at rehabilitation or training/education initiatives. He saw many of the demobilised now taking up weapons and reforming because they had no other option. Many, he also said, were taking up weapons to protect themselves as they were now targets of other armed groups and the government had not offered any form of security. He pointed to the murders of the demobilised paramilitaries across the country as evidence of their insecurity.

“08” stated that he was also concerned about the security of the region, not just of the individual paramilitaries. In the surrounding area, where around 70,000 people live, there are only 16 police officers. When paramilitary groups demobilised, the government did not increase its presence in the areas formerly under their control, creating a power vacuum. Other, active, armed groups are moving in, leaving the population vulnerable. He expressed the concern, that if the government does not ensure that populations are protected from guerrilla groups, many paramilitary leaders might consider it necessary to re-arm and re-establish order.

Like others the delegation had met, “08” also emphasised the importance of international monitoring and support in Colombia’s peace process. He stated the need for financial aid, but stipulated that it should not go via government channels, which he said were inept and corrupt. Rather, he said, he had become convinced of the efficacy of church groups doing work at the grassroots level and recommended that international donors try to work through them.

8.4. Tierra Alta

The delegation toured the village of Nueva Esperanza (New Hope), which is a resettlement project for a community displaced approximately four years ago. Members of the community fled their village after a paramilitary group forced them out, assassinating the local pastor as an act of intimidation. Like many displaced communities, they received little help from the government and sought sanctuary at a local church (Cristo Rey) in Tierra Alta. The church, though it had few resources itself, sought ways to help this community and was successful in soliciting resources both nationally and internationally to buy land, and essentially to construct a new village for the community.

Members of the displaced community, which is self-governing, were included in the entire process: the purchase of the land, allocation of plots, the construction of houses and community buildings, division of labour (e.g. agricultural projects, baking, etc) and unanimously chose to name their new village, “New Hope.” The project, which has received funding from a number of international donors, including the European Commission, did not receive support from the Colombian government; however, government officials have taken note of the success of the project and are now planning to collaborate with the church groups to establish similar communities, using Nueva Esperanza as a model.

8.5. Bogotá

The delegation’s first meeting of the day was with the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Francisco Santos. Based on the meetings over the previous three days, Simon Coveney raised particular points of interest relating to the demobilisation process and to government treatment and support for the internally displaced. Regarding support and treatment of IDPs, Vice-President Santos stated that the government had increased the budget for support to IDPs “times eight” over the past six years. In addition, they have approved a 25% increase for 2007.

However, he admitted that despite the good intentions of the national government, many IDPs fail to ever benefit from these increase due to corruption or non-implementation of programmes at the local and regional level. As an example, he pointed to the fact that the government had allocated 100,000 school vouchers for IDP children to be used to matriculate into local schools but that local governments had not followed through in the distribution. Simon Coveney pointed out that if IDPs were able to exercise their right to vote, it might make the local and regional governments more accountable to them. He encouraged the national government to look at the current requirements for re-registration

and to search for ways to make the process more straightforward, for example, automatically registering IDP adults to vote when they register to receive state benefits. The Vice-President agreed that this was a good idea and instructed his colleagues to look at how this might be done.

In relation to the demobilisation process, Vice-President Santos also conceded that there were a number of ways in which the programme could be improved. The national government has recently appointed a new Minister for Demobilisation, and they are planning to use the programmes in Medellín as a model for the rest of the country. The Vice-President also indicated that the Colombian government does not have the resources to establish a permanent and effective presence in all of the regions where paramilitaries have been demobilised, leading to a power vacuum and insecurity as other armed groups move in. According to him, more European Union support in this area (presumably financial, though he was not specific) is crucial.

The Vice-President also agreed with Simon Coveney that the situation of land-titles was a “disaster” – particularly relating to lands that had been taken over by armed groups and from which Colombian citizens had been displaced. Many of those people who lived on the land for generations, never actually had a paper deed to prove their ownership. In many cases, the ownership of land is disputed but there is often no legal registration to clarify the situation. He informed the delegation that a new law is being formulated to deal with this problem, but that the system is so chaotic and bureaucratic that government agencies are overwhelmed.

As a final point, Simon Coveney asked the Vice-President about the National Council for Peace, which according to law the Colombian president should convene, but which has yet to meet during his six years in office. The Vice-President did not give the impression that the administration was willing to convene the National Council for Peace and said instead, that they would continue with the current strategy to achieve peace. It was clear, he stated, that the government is winning the war with the FARC and the government also has real hopes that talks with the ELN will prove productive; that they will come to an agreement that participating in the 2007 local and regional elections is the best channel for the ELN to achieve its objectives.

After the delegation’s meeting with the Vice-President we met with a roundtable of Christian leaders from the regions of Santander, Caquetá, Arauca, and the city of Bogotá, including human rights defenders, journalists, and professors. The Colombians presented an overview of the dynamics in the region, listing many of the same concerns that panels in Cartagena and Sincelejo had presented, namely problems with the demobilisation process and resulting insecurity as well as lack of support for victims of the conflict, including the internally displaced. This appears to indicate that rather than being regional, these problems are widespread across the country and should be addressed on the national level. The panel presented the delegation with “A Prophetic Call,” the first report on human rights violations committed against the Evangelical Church in Colombia, which was issued in September 2006.

Some of the participants had travelled to the meeting from regions where there is a strong FARC presence and where violent conflict between all armed actors, including paramilitary and government forces, is still prevalent. Two teenage boys, ages 16 and 14, “Juan” and “Jose,” who were victims of attempted forced recruitment by the FARC, presented their testimonies. Both boys, who are cousins, had resisted this recruitment, partly because of their Christian faith and also because of their desire to continue with their education.

As often occurs in such cases, the FARC attempted to apply additional pressure on the boys to join by threatening their families. When the boys and their families continued refused to

comply, the FARC “disappeared” their father/uncle and brother/cousin. A few days later, the FARC returned and took four additional members of the family, including an uncle, an aunt/mother, and two more siblings. A few days later the bodies of all six were found in a nearby ravine. In order to protect the boys, the local church, in cooperation with the CRLP, was able to help the boys flee the region and find them a place in a safehouse, created to protect young people in similar situations in the capital city. Unfortunately, they said, many minors face the same problem as all the armed groups are guilty of recruitment, both forced and voluntary, of children. There are an estimated 11,000 child soldiers in the country.

8.6. Medellín

On the final day in the country, the delegation visited the “House of Peace,” outside of Medellín, where Francisco Galán, the spokesman for the ELN,⁴ is held under a kind of house arrest. Four “guarantors,” members of civil society including Jesuit priests, who oversee the House of Peace and act as neutral observers in peace negotiations, were also present. Galán explained to the delegation that the overall objective of the ELN is to build an “environment of peace” in Colombia. For this reason, as part of their demands to the government before they enter into a peace process, they are calling for three things.

The first is temporary ceasefire. The second is a demand that the government give adequate attention to the humanitarian crisis, including particular attention to the plight of the internally displaced. The ELN would like to see communities that have been displaced out of areas now under ELN control return to their places of origin and have called for the government to guarantee their security. They estimate that this will involve about 50,000 to 100,000 people. Last, they are calling for increased participation of civil society in the peace process and in the regional and local elections. Until these humanitarian demands are met, the delegation was told, the ELN could not guarantee that it would not engage in violence or other illegal activities like kidnapping.

The delegation asked Galán how the ELN sees the current situation with the paramilitaries and whether or not they see that peace process as a positive example. Galán stated that the ELN is watching the process carefully and thus far has not been convinced of the government’s ability or will to fulfil its obligations. The ELN, as a result, has a number of reservations about entering into full-fledged negotiations with the government. Galán also pointed to the experience of the 1980’s when guerrillas who negotiated with the government and entered into politics through a non-violent political party, the Patriotic Union, saw 3000 of their members, including 3 presidential candidates, assassinated by paramilitaries, as another cause for caution on the part of the ELN.

Galán concluded by emphasising the importance of international participation in the peace process in Colombia, stating that up to this point it has been vital, and should be at least maintained and, at best, increased. He was especially interested in learning from the Irish peace process and stated that representatives from protestant paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland had recently met with him and others to share their experiences. He expressed his hope that, at some point, members of the IRA would also be allowed to visit in order to share their perspective on the process.

The final meeting of the visit was with CRLP advocacy team leaders and other Christian leaders from Medellín and the regions of Antioquia and Medellín. They raised many of the same concerns that had been raised in Cartagena, Bogota, and Sincelejo – and were particularly concerned about the lack of support for demobilised paramilitaries in the social re-integration process. One member particularly highlighted the problem at the family level,

⁴ Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army, the smaller of the two main leftist guerrilla groups

stating that it was very common for these demobilised men to attempt to return home only to find that their families continued to fear them and would not accept them. This of course, leads to heightened problems in the re-integration process. The delegation asked about the “Medellín model” which the Vice-President had said would be applied to the rest of the country because of its success. Unfortunately, the representatives, many of whom work on a daily basis with demobilised paramilitary soldiers did not share the view that this model was particularly successful.