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## COLOMBIA | Churches issue statement welcoming potential peace talks

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Colombian churches have welcomed news of potential peace talks between the government and the largest leftwing guerrilla group in the country. This week, President Juan Manuel Santos, confirmed that the government has been conducting exploratory talks with the FARC in this hopes that this will lead to a formal dialogue.

A joint statement issued by members of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), the Peace Commission of the Colombian Council of Evangelical Churches (CEDECOL) and the Ecumenical Network of Colombia, expressed “hope that an end to the armed conflict, that we have lived in Colombia for almost fifty years, is possible.” The statement calls on all parties to address the root causes of the conflict, “so as to transform violent and exclusionary mentalities and practices.”

Catholic and Protestant churches have long been active in the promotion of peace and the defense of human rights across the country. The conflict has directly impacted communities of faith, hindering the free exercise of religion in some parts of the country. CSW’s partner in the country, the Peace Commission of CEDECOL estimates that at least 250 church leaders have been assassinated over the past decade. Twenty to thirty church leaders are believed to be killed each year.

Mervyn Thomas, CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, “We rejoice with our brothers in sisters in Colombia at this long overdue news of potential peace talks between the government and the FARC. We recognize the efforts on the part of the leaders of both sides to reach this point and encourage them to enter into any dialogue in good faith and a true commitment to peace that will benefit all citizens of Colombia. CSW will stand alongside the Colombian churches as they continue to bear witness to the reality on the ground and the impact of the violence on civilian populations, including communities of faith.”

### **Notes to Editor:**

1. For full text of statement please click [here](#)