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COLOMBIA | Congress Approves Revised Peace Deal

The revised Colombian peace agreement between the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was approved by Colombian Congress on Nov. 30.

On Oct. 2, the original peace agreement was narrowly rejected by 50.24% of the population in a national plebiscite. Since then, President Santos and his negotiating team have worked on a revised peace agreement in an attempt to meet some of the demands of those who voted against the original agreement.

The revised peace agreement aims to end hostilities between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). All actors in the 52-year internal conflict have been responsible for human rights violations, including violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Hundreds of church leaders have been the victims of targeted assassination since 2000 and churches have faced extortion from armed groups. Young people who are pacifist because of their religious convictions have also been forcibly conscripted by the army.

Since 2005, Christian Solidarity Worldwide's (CSW's) partner organizations have carried out a national project, supported by CSW, documenting human rights violations affecting communities of faith. It is hoped that this documentation will contribute to investigations as part of a truth and reconciliation process laid out in this peace agreement to shed light on the tens of thousands of unresolved cases of murder and forced displacement in Colombia, including the kidnap and murder of US missionaries in the 1990s.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "CSW welcomes the revised Colombian peace agreement which represents a crucial step forward in bringing an end to a conflict that has left millions of victims over more than half a century. CSW calls for its rapid implementation and

urges all parties to honor the promises laid out in the agreement. We particularly call for the implementation of the process of truth, justice and no repetition which we hope will uncover the human rights violations committed by all actors in this conflict and bring some measure of clarity and peace for the victims and their families.”