

FARC's Reincorporation: the Outlook for 2020

The 2020 Final Peace Agreement set in motion the laying down of arms by the FARC-EP and the political, social and economic processes of reincorporation. As set out in Chapter 3 of the agreement, these processes seek to close the chapter of conflict and allow the FARC-EP to actively contribute, along with all Colombians, to co-existence and the non-recurrence of violence. After three years, this snapshot looks to what 2020 might bring for reincorporation in Colombia.

Political Reincorporation

The agreement enable the FARC-EP to fight with words not weapons by guaranteeing their transition to a new, legal political party. The People's Revolutionary Alternative Force (FARC) was founded in 2017 and has the same rights as any other legal party to participate in elections and receive initial financial support, as well as security guarantees for its members. Allowances have only been made for membership and electoral support, where the FARC has until 2026 to meet the required levels. In addition, for 2 constitutional periods the FARC will receive 5 seats in the Senate and 5 seats within the House of Representatives. 2020 is a key year for the FARC to overcome two key challenges within the party to ensure its survival:

1. Internal Divisions

In August 2019, two key leaders of the party - Ivan Márquez and Jesús Santrich - announced a returned to arms in a 'new phase of armed struggle'. In January 2020, it was announced that they had plotted to assassinate the current leader of the party, Rodrigo Londoño - Timochenko. There has also been a disconnection with some of the FARC's base who have left the party, and other key figures such as the Dutch combatant Tanja Nijmeijer who resigned in January 2020.

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2. Broader Participation

The 2018 and 2019 elections have shown limited support for the FARC. Regions where the FARC-EP previously held influence in conflict have not easily translated into popular support for the FARC political party and the most success has come from coalitions with other parties, in particular Colombia Humana - UP. There is a need for the party to reform and integrate a wider, diverse group of society. Broader participation will help new ideas to surface that can move the party forward and improve results in future elections.

Social and Economic Reincorporation

Reincorporation is also about ex-combatants and their families entering civilian life within the norms and laws of the state, and according to their needs and interests. To do so, each person received a one-off 'normalisation payment' and then a basic income for up to 8 years (equivalent of 90% of the minimum salary and only provided if below the earning threshold). Access is also provided to social programmes, workshops and training, formal education, peace pedagogy and programmes to launch productive projects that will help to ensure their independence as citizens. All support, financial or otherwise, is dependent on their ongoing commitment to the process and their compliance with the comprehensive system of transitional justice.

However, serious challenges remain. Two of the most pressing are:



1. Security

The latest report by the UN's Verification Mission in Colombia records 2019 as the most violent year for ex-combatants with 77 killed. In total, since the signing of the peace agreement this figure is at over 170 with a further 29 attempts and 14 disappearances. This is a challenge not just for those that remain within the Territorial Spaces of Territorial and Reincorporation (TSTR) where they began the process. The vast majority of those killed have been from the larger group of ex-combatants that do not enjoy the same protection now that they are living with family, searching for better opportunities in cities, or living in New Regrouping Points (NPR) elsewhere in the regions.

2. Economic Challenges

The last three years have seen some success with productive projects (agricultural, ecotourism, rafting and beer amongst others) that bring in an income and present opportunities for Colombians (and the world) to get to know 'the other' from the conflict. However, only 1 in 4 ex-combatants is benefitting from one of these projects. Additionally, many face ongoing stigmatisation with respect to employment and trading opportunities.

Embrace Dialogue recognises some progress has been made in reincorporation and that this is a long-term process. However, we are concerned by the killing of FARC members. 2020 will require a coherent and serious commitment by the Colombian government and sustained engagement from the FARC, the business sector and civil society. In the next snapshots, we will share how specific aspects of the process are unfolding within the territories.

