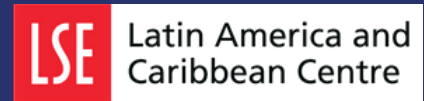




**EMBRACE
DIALOGUE
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With the support of:



LONDON | FEBRUARY 22, 2019

On 19 February in University College London, the first session was held of Embrace Dialogue Academia (EDA), a community of British and Colombian academics doing research in the UK on different aspects of the Colombian peace process. EDA members seek to offer their combined expertise to make practical recommendations to the ongoing situation in Colombia.

This first meeting centred on the Truth Commission and its relationship with history and peace education. EDA shared several hopes for the Truth Commission – we recognise it has an inspiring mandate, including innovative global firsts, such as a gender focus. We are excited at the pedagogical principle of the Truth Commission. We hope that it can take advantage of the opportunity to work with Colombia's education system, to look at how education was a factor in reproduction of the conflict, drawing on best practices developed by the Peruvian Truth Commission, and how education and transitional justice oriented education reform can be a field for preventing future cycles of violence. We note that a strength is the plethora of grassroots memory work already existing in Colombia, which is already in dialogue with members of the Truth Commission.

Despite these hopes, we are concerned about the extremely challenging political context that the Truth Commission has to work in, the opposition it is facing, the 40% budget cut it received, and the challenge it has in how to work with sectors who have been opposed to the peace process. We note in this sense the difficulty the Truth Commission will have in fulfilling not only the truth-telling part of its mandate, but also the coexistence and non-repetition parts. In this regard, a "contestatory mechanism", for dissent to be expressed formally within the structure of the Truth Commission, could be a useful solution. We are also concerned about the future of the National Centre for Historical Memory, which has done important work to support teaching the history of the armed conflict in schools using historical memory pedagogies. This is crucial for preventing new cycles of conflict in the future. We hope such work will continue, and that the 2019 local elections enable a better political climate for the Truth Commission to carry out its work.

Embrace Dialogue Academia offers its solidarity and collaboration to the fundamental work of the Truth Commission. We will continue to ask critical questions about its work, and offer ideas and solutions to those difficult questions.

Embrace Dialogue Academia (EDA) seeks to bring together academics working on different aspects of the peace process in Colombia in regular itinerant dialogues to share knowledge and analysis, and work together to enable practical impact. Academics from the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Leicester, Oxford, Reading, Queen Mary, UCL and the UCL Institute of the Americas and the Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS) participated in the first seminar.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this statement are product of a closed-door dialogue, and do not reflect the views of the institutions named.