

Commitment of ex-combatants from the FARC-EP to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the Truth Commission

This fourth Reincorporation Snapshot highlights the commitment of former members of the FARC-EP to reconciliation, not only from the FARC political party, but also others within the reincorporation process who belong to other political groups. Implementing the Peace Agreement, through reincorporating these groups into civil society, represents a big challenge. The efforts being made by different sectors to overcome these difficulties are vital for ensuring that the reincorporation process continues.

Commitment of FARC-EP ex-combatants to the JEP

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP, *spanish acronym*) is one of the most important institutions for the implementation of the Peace Agreement. This is because it seeks to address impunity by advocating for restorative justice. However, following the signing of the Peace Agreement, the JEP has been one of the institutions most targeted by opponents of the agreement. In recent weeks, the JEP has been criticised for accepting an ex-guerrilla fighter, alias Mata Hari, who is to be released from prison in order to participate in the JEP. It has also been criticised for maintaining the term 'retention' used by the FARC in its testimonies, to refer to kidnapping. Some political and public opinion sectors, especially some victims' organisations, have expressed their indignation at these events.



Nevertheless, the FARC political party has reiterated its commitment to the JEP; stressing its desire to clarify the truth surrounding the armed conflict and its remorse for the victims. Recently, the FARC publicly declared that they would publicise their complete collective version of the kidnappings in addition to holding public acts of recognition. This decision will help bring clarity to what happened, contribute to reparations for victims, and strengthen the reincorporation of former FARC-EP combatants into their communities.

For its part, the JEP has remained firm in fulfilling its mandate. In recent days, Patricia Linares, the JEP's President, commented that the criticisms levelled at the JEP are proof of its progress; the fact that society is debating its decisions is part of the indirect participation of citizens in the process of transitional justice.

The Truth Commission listens to former FARC-EP combatants

On 9 March 2020, the Colombian Truth Commission's first listening space was held, on this occasion with former combatants and their families. This was a space where they could tell their stories about the violence that has been taking place during the Peace Agreement implementation in the territories where they live; former members of the FARC-EP, as well as social leaders, have been threatened, attacked and murdered. According to the latest report of the United Nations Verification Mission, since the signing of the Peace Agreement, 173 former combatants have been murdered, 14 have been *disappeared* and 29 attempted murders have been recorded. This makes 2019 the most violent year for former combatants.

These listening spaces help with reconciliation because they provide another version of the story - the version of which Colombian society is generally unaware.



This different perspective helps transform the image of former combatants from murderers and terrorists, and challenges the binary vision of war that we have (eg. victims and victimizers, good and bad). These spaces also raise public awareness around the security issues that ex-combatants and their families face, and the need to provide them with adequate security and safeguarding, which will in turn significantly help their reincorporation into society.

Challenges: security and coexistence

The first listening space has highlighted the persistent challenge for the reincorporation of former FARC-EP combatants: security. This is an even more complex challenge now due to the 2000 ex-combatants who want to contribute to the consolidation of peace but do not feel represented by the FARC political party. The security of these former combatants and their families must be guaranteed. Moreover, community leaders who live in the same areas as these ex-combatants must be protected.

The processes of clarification and justice are complex. They are emotionally charged and touch on different sensitivities across social sectors. The great challenge for Colombian society will be whether, through dialogue about the past and the acceptance of responsibility by those who participated in the war, Colombia can achieve what Professor Leigh Payne has called "contentious coexistence" between victims, perpetrators and other social sectors.

Embrace Dialogue values the commitment of former combatants of the FARC-EP and invites Colombian society to recognize their contribution to transitional justice mechanisms in order to continue moving forward, away from the armed conflict.

