

## On the verge of the start of the peace process between the FARC-EP dissidents and the Colombian government

The negotiated solution to the armed rebellion of the FARC-EP underwent at least three attempts and almost half a century of confrontations to achieve the Final Agreement to End the Armed Conflict and Build of a Stable and Lasting Peace in November 2016.

However, this historic achievement has been tainted both by the Agreement's rejection in a referendum, and **its bumpy implementation by the Colombian state**, which demonstrates the persistence of economic, social and political factors that perpetuate conflict and inequality. Against this backdrop, a small fraction of the FARC-EP **decided to remain in arms** and have consolidated a new group alongside some former combatants who did sign the Agreement.

With the emergence of the FARC-EP dissidents, cycles of violence have been reproduced as these and other actors have **fought to regain control** of the historical territories occupied by the FARC-EP.

The election of Gustavo Petro in August 2022, in particular his administration's 'Total Peace' policy, had a positive response by dissident groups, which was reflected in public statements. Moreover, during the second semester of 2022, **a command unit was configured** around the Estado Mayor Central (EMC).



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The Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (OACP), led by Danilo Rueda, alongside the international community and other intermediaries, held encounters with the EMC that have put the country on the brink of formal peace negotiations with the group. This process began with **confidential meetings** that resulted in a public statement by the EMC on September 17, 2022, where the group declared its intention to negotiate with the government in a more formal setting.

On December 31, 2022, President Petro published **Decree 2656**, with which he ordered the suspension of military operations and declared the initiation of a bilateral ceasefire between January 1 and June 30, 2023. The decree also created an Oversight, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism made up of the national government (Ministry of Defense, OACP, and the public force), the EMC, territorial social organisations and the Catholic Church, and an international component made up of the Verification Mission of the UN in Colombia and the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process (MAPP). A protocol for the parties to move forward in fulfilling the decree, which covers approximately 3,200 people up in arms across 23 fronts, was signed by the EMC and the government on February 8, 2023.

The **exchanges** between Petro and Attorney General Francisco Barbosa since January 2023 have paved the way towards a formal phase of talks with the EMC, offering greater clarity to public opinion on the legal aspects of the process to allow the de-escalation of the armed conflict while the peace talks are taking place.



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Barbosa's **decision** on March 13, 2023 to approve President Petro's request to suspend the arrest warrants against 19 members of the EMC is essential to facilitate rapprochement between the parties. This will enable a summit of guerrilla leaders to take place, which implies their mobilisation to a concentration point with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Verification Mission, the MAPP-OEA and the Norwegian Embassy in Colombia.

In this context, both Petro and Commissioner Rueda **announced** on March 13 that the General Attorney's decision permitted the start of a peace process and that the names of the negotiators on both sides would be announced in the coming days.

This set of advances generates the necessary conditions so that, in the negotiation phase, the parties agree on an agenda to develop the public phase of talks. It will therefore be key to take on board the lessons of previous experiences - these include the responsibility of the parties to provide truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition, as well as that of the state to guarantee their lives and projects of reintegration into civilian life. Likewise, it is essential that the international community supports this process, as agreed by the parties.

***Rodeemos el Diálogo celebrates the progress between the parties and supports their intention to start a formal and public dialogue process to halt the violence and overcome the structural causes that perpetuate it. We hope that the Segunda Marquetalia, its allied structures, and the government work to foster negotiations that address the causes of the prevalence of the armed conflict and the implementation of the Final Agreement of 2016.***



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