



ANNEX B – ANALYSIS TABLE

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Country: Colombia

Responsible desk officer: [REDACTED]

Human rights contact at Post: [REDACTED]

Gravity of the human rights situation in-country: *The Colombian government began peace negotiations with the FARC guerrilla group in 2012 after 50 years on internal conflict. The conflict has led to 7.7 million victims – the majority displaced (Colombia is second only to Syria in numbers of IDPs). Over 220,000 people have been killed, and tens of thousands disappeared, kidnapped, and victims of sexual violence.*

Despite a serious commitment by the GoC to tackle entrenched human rights issues (see below), many human rights abuses committed as a result of the continuing armed conflict and actions of illegal groups continue. Human rights defenders (including community leaders, land restitution leaders, and minority rights leaders) are threatened and killed

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[REDACTED]

The peace process, due to be signed in 2016, has allowed the GoC to tackle many of these issues head on. But there is a widely-held concern that security could in fact worsen on the signing of a peace deal, as illegal armed groups fill the security vacuum left by the FARC. This will leave civilians vulnerable, particularly in rural areas with limited state presence.

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[REDACTED]

Trajectory of change: *Colombia has been designated an FCO "country of concern" since 2009, after the scandal of extrajudicial killings by the Armed Forces came to light. Since 2010, when President Santos took office, the Colombian government have made efforts to improve its human rights situation. In 2011 President Santos passed the Victims Law and Land Restitution Law, to compensate the millions of victims. In 2015, on winning a second term, he appointed an HR advisor to report directly to the Presidency. The HR advisor published a HR report in 2015 after a 5 year hiatus.*

The UK has been a strong supporter of the GoC's improvement in human rights issues. Through our focus on three priority issues – PSVI, business and human rights, and HRDs – we have been able to make a tangible difference. The UK helped Colombia draft its National Action Plan on B+HR over a three-year period, culminating in the publication of the Plan in December 2015 (making Colombia the first country outside of Europe to do so). A strong bilateral relationship has allowed the UK to act as a critical friend on sensitive human rights

issues.

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[REDACTED]

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But Colombia continues to present a worrying environment for human rights defenders [REDACTED] There remains significant NGO and parliamentary interest in human rights in Colombia – over 50% of Parliamentary letters and PQs received by the Americas Directorate are about Colombia.

Summary of UK engagement on human rights:

The UK is an active partner with the GoC and civil society organisations in Colombia. We have spent over £890,000 in Colombia on Human Rights and Democracy Programme support over the last 5 years, largely on three main priority areas: PSVI, business and human rights, and HRDs. The UK is recognised as a leader on these issues and in general is known for its leading role in the European Union and other international community platforms on human rights issues. The UK lobbies regularly on UN/UNHRC resolutions as needed, although Colombia is usually a like-minded partner.

Human rights form a core priority for the UK Embassy in Bogotá. High-level visits are used to promote the UK's support for certain issues, such as events hosted by former Foreign Secretary William Hague and the Duchess of Cornwall in 2014 on PSVI. We use digital engagement and hold regular events to support our activity in-country.

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Recommendation: Colombia should be designated an HRPC. The UK has a strong track record of supporting the GoC on priority HR issues and should be supporting more, not less, through the implementation of Colombia's peace process. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Peace Brigades International UK – Briefing for [REDACTED]

We are very grateful for the support that the embassy in Colombia has always given both to PBI and our accompanied organizations. Among the many cases you have supported are:

- The criminalised Human Rights Defender, **David Ravelo**, who was sentenced to 220 months in prison in a process full of irregularities.
- Land restitution processes such as the Afro-Colombian collective territories of **Jiguamiandó Curvaradó**, and **Pedeguita y Mancilla** which embassy officials recently visited.
- Human rights organizations such as **CCAJAR**, the **Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP)**, and the lawyer **Jorge Molano** who the embassy also recently accompanied by attending as observers at hearings in one of the cases of extrajudicial executions in which Jorge represents the victims.

Current situation for Human Rights Defenders

PBI applauds the progress in the peace negotiations between the FARC and the government in Havana, and the recently announced negotiations with the ELN. Despite these efforts for peace in Colombia, the current situation of increased risk for human rights defenders in this country is worrying.

In this regard we would like to draw attention to the escalating threats against human rights defenders in the country, and emphasize that **attacks against human rights defenders have increased every year since 2010**. In 2014, there were 626 attacks recorded against human rights defenders, which was an increase of 71% from 2013. **Between January and September 2015 577 attacks against human rights defenders were recorded**. Of the 55 human rights defenders killed in 2014, 60% had previously reported that they had received death threats. **In the first nine months of 2015, there have been 51 murders of defenders**. Between January 2009 and September 2015, 334 HRDs have been killed in Colombia.

It is worrying to see the aggression against women defenders (WHRDS) have also increased. In 2013 85 aggressions against WHRDS were registered, in 2014 this rose to 221 and between January and September 2015, 249 aggressions have already been reported.

Neo-Paramilitaries in Urabá

According to the UNHCHR, "violence and social control of post-demobilization groups and criminal organizations continue to affect the whole range of human rights of the population and in particular human rights defenders". According to the program *Somos Defensores*, the main group responsible for attacks registered against defenders between January and September of 2015 were: **neo-paramilitary groups in 72% of cases** followed by unknown actors (21%), State Agents (7%), the ELN and the FARC (0,5%).

Although the Colombian authorities continue to deny the existence of these neo paramilitary groups who they qualify as criminal gangs (Bacrim) in the service of common crime and drug trafficking, in its report on the situation of human rights in Colombia, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) stated that "violence due to the lack of an effective and complete dismantling of armed paramilitary structures, continues to severely impact the rights of the people of Colombia". In this regard, the annual report of Human Rights Watch 2014, indicates that despite progress in capturing leaders of neo-paramilitary groups, the Colombian authorities have not countered the power of these groups, adding that they maintain their power, among other things because "tolerance and connivance of members of the local police." PBI emphasizes the importance of taking steps to investigate and respond to the presence of neo-paramilitary groups in various regions of the country and the political and economic structures that have supported them. Without the dismantlement of these groups, a lasting and consolidated peace is not possible.

PBI UK is a non-governmental organisation working with communities around the world to address conflicts in non-violent ways.
Registered in England, Company Reg. No: 03912587, Charity Reg. No: 1101016

PBI UK patrons: Lord Avebury, Sir Nicolas Bratza, Sir Henry Brooke CMG, Lord Carnwath CVO, Julie Christie CBE, Baroness Frances D'Souza, Lord Lester of Herne Hill QC, Professor Jenny Pearce, Sir Nigel Rodley KBE, Sir Peter Roth, Juliet Stevenson, Lord Joel Joffe, Sir Jeffrey Jowell KCMG QC, Samuel West

In recent months there have been several complaints about the presence of neo-paramilitary groups in the region of Urabá, specifically around the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and in the Lower Atrato in Chocó where PBI accompanies the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP) in Curvaradó, Jiguamiandó, Cacarica and Pedeguita Mancilla.

We want to highlight two recent situations in which PBI directly witnessed this presence:

- 3 October; PBI accompanied CIJP on a verification commission in the Lower Atrato. In one of the communities we saw the presence of two armed men in plain clothes that people identified as neo-paramilitaries.
- 28 October; PBI was accompanying the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó when we encounter uniformed and armed men who identified themselves as members of the Gaitanista Self Defense Forces of Colombia – Usuga Front.

Civil society organizations have made various complaints about the presence of and threats from neo-paramilitary groups towards communities. The situation has even led to the *Defensoría del Pueblo* releasing an early warning alert to warn the civilians of the dangers they face due to the presence of the Gaitanista Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC).

Buenaventura

We would like to make a special mention of the Humanitarian Space in the city of Buenaventura, who PBI accompany through the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace (CIJP), a process that PBI have accompanied for a year and a half and that we have spoken of several times with the embassy in Bogota.

Many national and international organizations and even different UN agencies have documented high levels of violence, including displacement, disappearances, killings, torture and dismemberment, mostly carried out by neo-paramilitary groups in Buenaventura. In response to this widespread violence, in April 2014 dozens of families accompanied by CIJP, created a humanitarian space in the La Playita, one of the most violent neighbourhoods in the city, where one of the "chop-up houses" was located. The philosophy of this space is that no illegal armed group can enter the humanitarian space.

There have been numerous threats both towards families that live there as well as against members of CIJP during this year and a half. Additionally, the neo-paramilitary presence itself continues in the nearby streets and unfortunately, despite the permanent presence of army and police, on July 19, two children were killed 500 meters from the entrance to the humanitarian space. One of them, Cristian Aragon, lived within the space and his family had recently returned to Buenaventura. A year ago they were forced to flee due to constant threats because Cristian and his family had refused to be recruited to neo-paramilitary structures.

PBI continues to have serious concerns about the security situation of the members of Humanitarian Space in Buenaventura and their companions from the Inter-Church Commission for Justice and Peace. The murder of the young Cristian Aragon, a beneficiary of precautionary measures from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH) was a result of pressure against a family that has opposed the neo-paramilitary structures in Buenaventura. Previously, 7 members of the family Valenzuela Aragon had suffered threats from neo-paramilitary groups and two assassination attempts, in retaliation to their complaints against illegal recruitment of minors and child prostitution. As a result of this harassment, and facing an imminent risk, in particular due to repeated threats against Cristian, the family was forced to move from the humanitarian space to Jamundi in mid 2014. Once there, they continued to face attacks and threats, so they decided to return to the Humanitarian Space on 27 June, 2015. ⁱⁱ

Following the tragic murder of Cristian, his father Ezequiel Aragon has received death threats from neo-paramilitary groups, claiming that they would kill him despite the "gringos", referring to the national and international organizations that accompany the Humanitarian Space. In addition, individuals have attempted to enter the house of the Aragon Valenzuela family. ⁱⁱⁱ This has resulted in the displacement of the family, which remain displaced today. The family members who stayed, have received threats from neo-paramilitary groups. ^{iv} On 4 October, Mrs. Doris Valenzuela, mother of Cristian and one of the leaders

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of the Humanitarian Space, having already been displaced to Bogota, received two threatening calls telling her to withdraw the complaint.^v A leader of the Humanitarian Space Maria Nieves was harassed by a neo-paramilitary, when she came out of a meeting with the representative of the United States Democrat Party Keith Ellison. The 16 year-old son of Maria Nieves, Oscar, was killed in July 2014 in the same place as Cristian Aragon. The neo-paramilitary warned Nieves to withdraw the complaint filed relating to the murder of her son in which they have identified several of those responsible. CIJP also denounced constant threats, robberies, extortion and illegal surveillance of the members of CIJP and the Humanitarian Space.^v

In several neighbourhoods, located by the sea and known as "low-water areas," the municipal government has proposed building a seawall and macro resort, expanding the Buenaventura Container Terminal and building a Center of Economic Activities.^{vii} However, communities have stated that these projects go against the ancestral ways of life. The place where the Humanitarian Space is located is of key economic and territorial interest as it is where the seawall and tourist promenade are planned.

The Humanitarian Space is an emblematic example of community processes in resistance, declaring themselves neutral in a context of strong political and social violence. In Buenaventura, despite the absence of the armed conflict, there are strong political and economic interests that threaten the fundamental rights of the community.

Recommendations

We ask the Embassy to urge the Colombian state;

- **To ensure guarantees for the work of human rights defenders.** The numbers of attacks against human rights defenders, social leaders and land claimants is extremely alarming. It is essential that effective steps be taken to achieve guarantees so that HRDs may freely carry out their work; primarily that prevention measures are taken such as ensuring investigations are carried out and sanctions on those responsible are implemented. The current situation of lack of guarantees for the exercise of the defense of human rights, can have a negative effect on the talks in Havana;
- **To ensure the safety of members of the CIJP** in their accompaniment work in the Lower Atrato as well as the safety of the communities and members of the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó whom they accompany;
- **To urge the Attorney General's Office to undertake investigations into the allegations of neo paramilitary presence in the region of Urabá.** Furthermore, to urge the Colombian government to take all necessary measures to dismantle these groups. Without the dismantlement of these groups, a lasting and consolidated peace is not possible;
- **To implement the precautionary protection measures for the Humanitarian Space** requested by the IACHR and agreed with the Colombian government;
- To take the necessary measures to protect the lives and personal integrity of the 302 Afro-Colombian families residing in San Francisco – Nayero Street, La Playita neighbourhood as part of the Humanitarian Space;
- Report on the actions taken to investigate the events that led to the adoption of the precautionary measures and thus prevent possible repetition;

Although the UK is unable to participate in the EU delegation to Buenaventura at the end of November, we request that the EU delegation visit the Humanitarian Space, as such, publically giving their support and backing to this important initiative of peaceful resistance.

- i 140703 Cijp: Amenazan con matar a Integrantes del Espacio Humanitario; 140707 Cijp: Torturas policiales, amenazas de muerte y plan de masacre contra Integrantes del Espacio Humanitario Puente Nayero, barrio La Playita, Buenaventura, y acompañantes de derechos humanos
- ii Cijp: Golpean y amenazan a familia Aragón, 27 de abril de 2015; Intento de asesinato y amenazas de muerte, 16 de junio de 2015; Paramilitares atentan contra lideresa Doris Valenzuela, 4 de mayo de 2015; Intento de asesinato y amenazas de muerte, 16 de junio de 2015; Paramilitares amenazan a lideresas, 1ro de julio de 2015
- iii Cijp: Planean asesinato de familia Aragón, 23 de julio de 2015
- iv Cijp: Continúa persecución a familia Aragón, 20 de agosto de 2015
- v Cijp: Amenazan a lideresa Doris Valenzuela, 5 de octubre de 2015
- vi Cijp: Paramilitares presionan a líder negra e indígena, 21 de septiembre de 2015
- vii Cinép: Noche y Niebla (pág.95), diciembre 2013.

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 November 2015 21:45
To: [REDACTED]

Section 40

Subject: RE: PARAMILITARY PRESENCE IN COLOMBIA

Many thanks for this, [REDACTED] I have copied a bit more widely as thought it might be interesting for other teams in the Embassy and colleagues in London.

[REDACTED] Section 40

[Link: Bill Clinton's Facebook page](#) [UK in Colombia](#) [Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/embassyukcolombia](#) // [Photo UK in Colombia](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 November 2015 15:46
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: PARAMILITARY PRESENCE IN COLOMBIA

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Team,

This week, the Institute of Studies for Development and Peace (Indepaz), presented the latest annual monitoring report on paramilitary groups. The following are the main figures:

- Paramilitary groups have presence in 30,1% of the municipalities in Colombia a total of 338 municipalities (298 of them have had presence of these groups for more than 6 years) and in 31 out of the 32 departments.
- The most affected departments, with more than 60% of their municipalities of paramilitary presence are: Vichada, Sucre, Magdalena, La Guajira, Guaviare, Cordoba, Choco and Cesar.
- Between 2008 and 2015, the paramilitary groups had discontinuous presence in at least 680 municipalities.
- There are at least 17 groups. The strongest are Los Urabenos (AKA Clan Usuga or Autodefensas Gaitanistas), Los Rastrojos, Aguilas Negras (AKA buenaventurenos or Los Machos) and The Irregular Armed Forces of Colombia (FIAC).
- According to Indepaz, Los Urabenos consists of different groups as Libertadores del Vichada or Bloque Meta created by demobilised members of the paramilitary organisation "Ejército Revolucionario Popular Anticomunista de Colombia (Erpac)" after the failed demobilisation process under Uribe's Government.
- The Bloque Meta (another organisation) was divided geographically in three groups: FIAC, Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia and Águilas Negras.
- The Irregular Armed Forces of Colombia (FIAC) is the newest organisation, created in 2014. Its structure consists of squadrons of 25 men each, and military blocks of 200-250 armed men.

Grupos narcoparamilitares

TOTAL
338
MUNICIPIOS

Urabeños
270
Municipios

Rastrojos
111

Agullas Negras o parás
(Los botaneros de los municipios)
50

277
Presencia territorial desde hace más de tres años

FAC
26

Bloque Meta
8

Oficina de envigado
7

Libertadores del Vichada
7

Autodefensas Gaitanistas
4

Cordillero
3

Los botaneros
2

Llaneros
2

La empresa
4

Renacer
1

Los solís
1

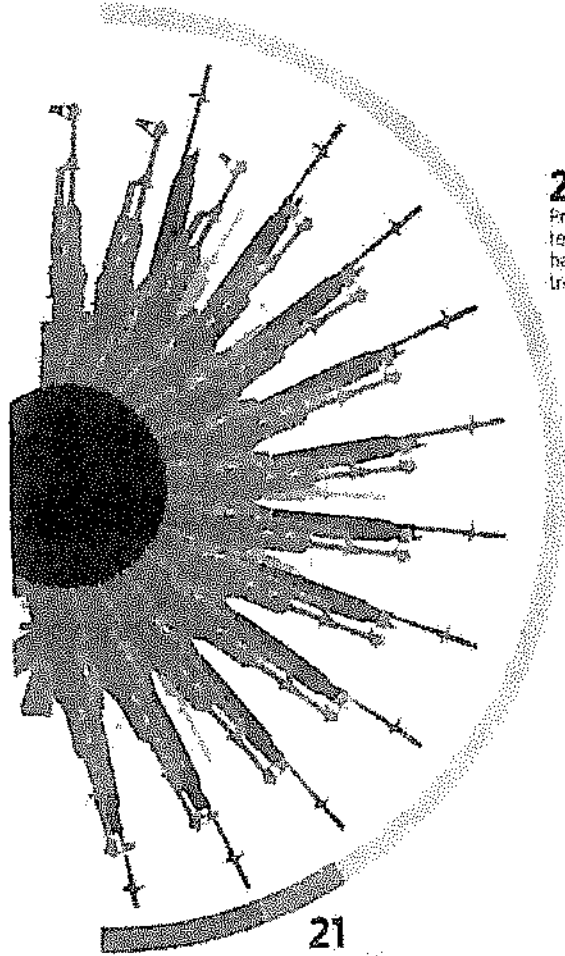
Autodefensas campesinas del Tolima
Comandos Niche AUC
2

21
Los últimos tres años.

40
existencia de grupos
órganos que ya
representan a través
territorial

Los del tucú
1

Los de polcarpa
1

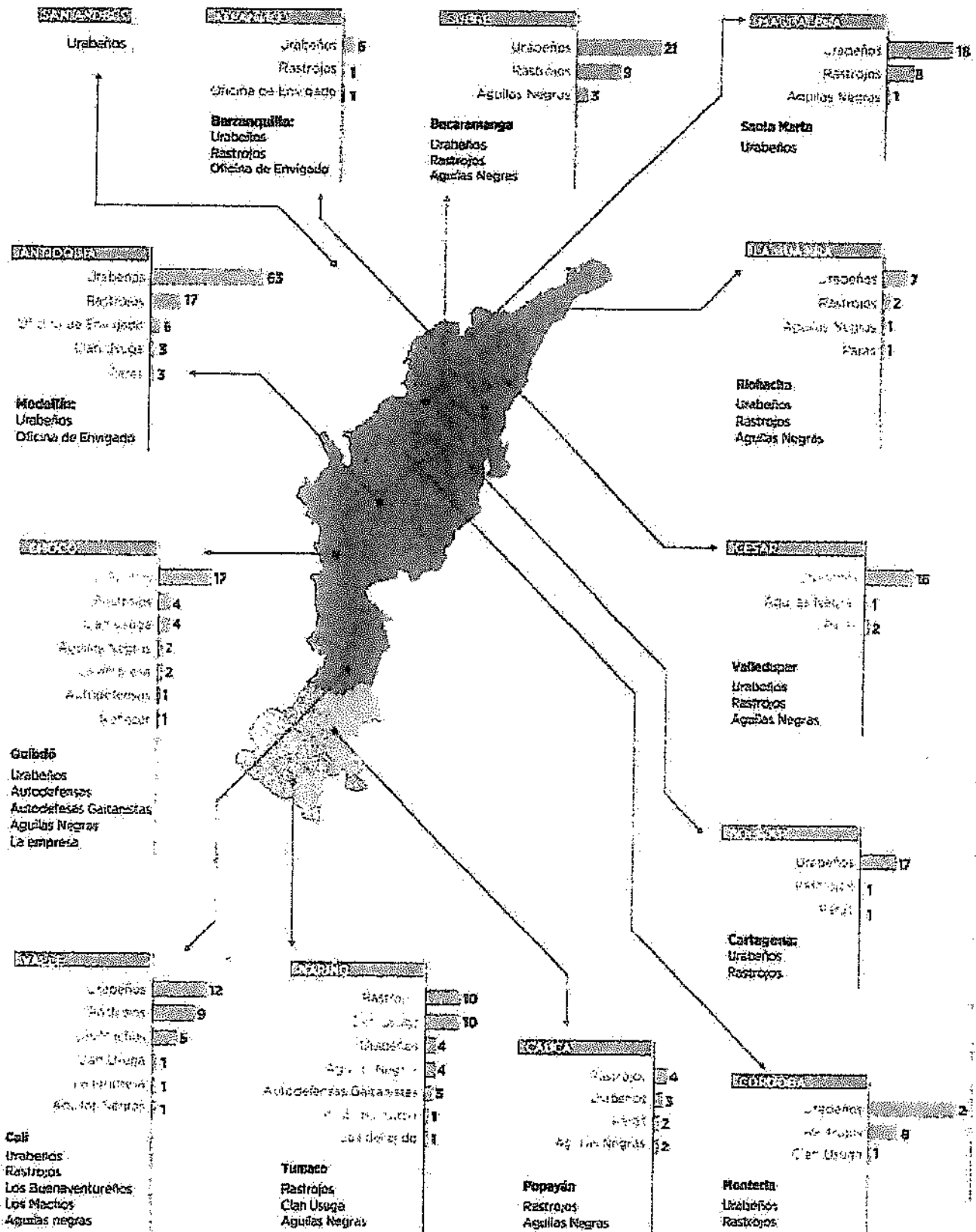


Presencia de grupos narcoparamilitares

Grupo que predomina por departamento

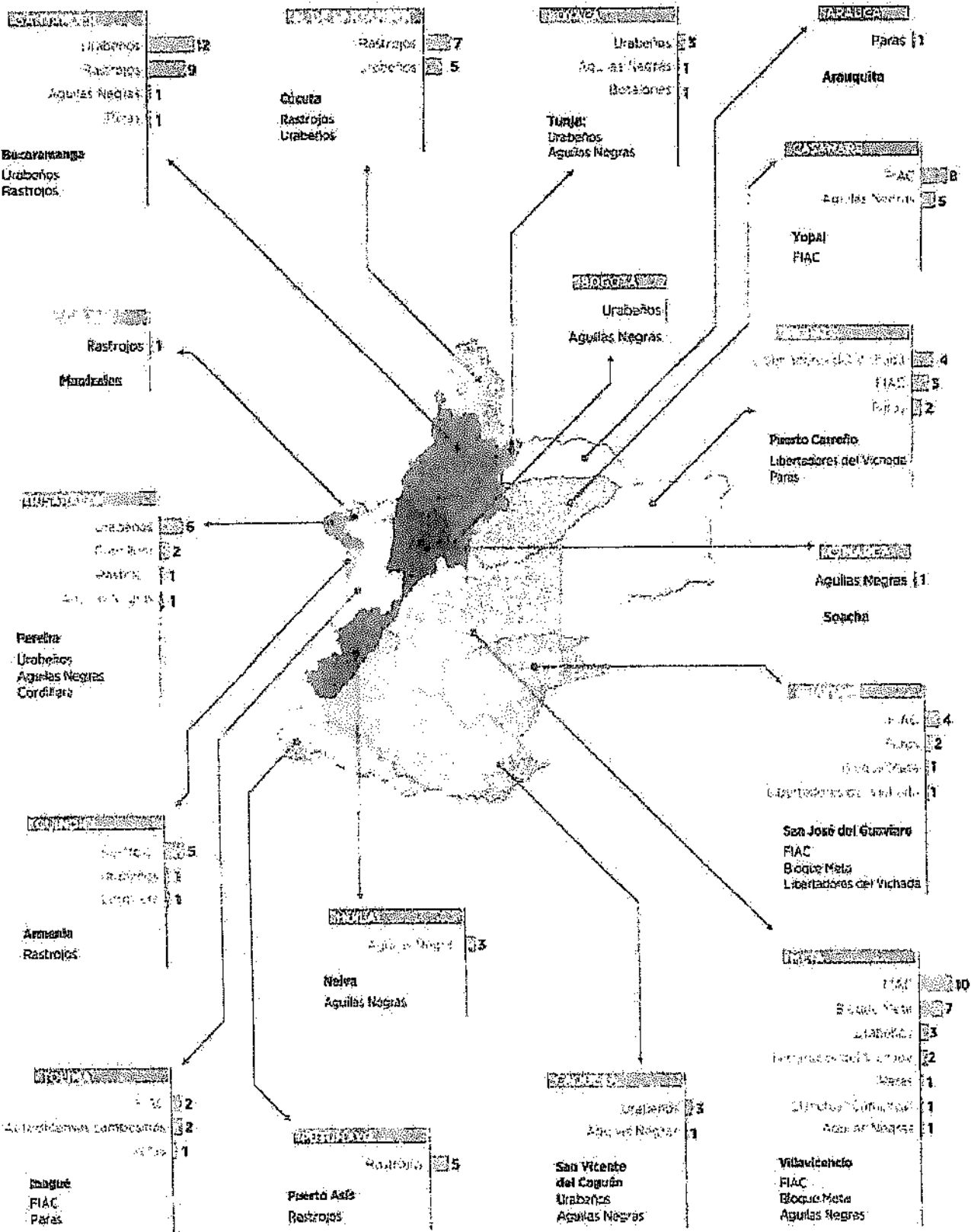
■ Número de municipios en los que se encuentran

■ Urabeños ■ Rastrojos



Grupo que predomina por departamento

Urabeños
 Rastrojos
 FIAc
 Aguilas Negras
 Otros grupos



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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 April 2016 00:00
To: Peter Tibber (Sensitive)
Cc: [REDACTED]

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Subject: Buenaventura: visit by EU in January 2016 OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE
Attachments: Visit of EU HR-Working Group to Buenaventura.doc

HMA,

On 26-27 January I visited Buenaventura with the EU Human Rights working group. The municipality is experiencing a social and humanitarian crisis. Although the most important port in the country (60% of Colombia's trade passes through its docks), Buenaventura is infamous for human rights violations, poor social conditions, high levels of unemployment (70%) and conflict and criminal related-violence. I attach the detailed EU report, but wanted to highlight a few salient points:

Politics

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[REDACTED]

Security and Conflict

- Almost every community and organisation we met recognised the presence in urban zones of two post-demobilisation groups: Clan Úsuga and La Empresa. There are reports that Clan Úsuga has reduced its presence in Buenaventura, while the local criminal gang La Empresa is controlling most of the city, leading to a tense calm in the municipality. Both groups use kids as drug mules and informants.
- The ELN and FARC have control of the rural areas.
- The confrontation between the criminal groups for control of the urban area, drug routes and arms traffic, led to the infamous *casas de pique*, of people dismembered for not paying extortion fees or crossing invisible borders. While this spike between 2013-2014, there have been reported cases since.
- Local police statistics show an improvement in the security situation. According to the local authorities, the homicide rate was reduced by 48% from 147 homicides in 2014 to 78 in 2015. Authorities owe the success to the military intervention approved by President Santos and the efficiency of the bolstered justice system.

Social Conditions

- Buenaventura's ethnic composition is 90% afro-descendant, 6% indigenous, 4% mestizo. Afro communities said there have been more than 8,000 violent deaths in the last ten years which they claim is an ethnocide.
- Buenaventura is one of the rainiest cities on earth, yet the water agency supplies water only for several hours in the morning and only to those homes (a minority) that are connected to the system.
- Buenaventura does not have a public hospital and proper health services.
- 80% live in poverty, 43% in extreme poverty.

Human Rights

- Black communities claim to be victims of development rather than victims of the conflict, as the port has grown without taking into account the population.
- In different meetings it was said that some companies [REDACTED] have established relations with illegal armed groups so that the gangs can support them and forcibly displace the

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communities from the territory of interest. The group later met with [redacted] who said the community claims are false, and that they comply with all the regulations as they are a World bank funded project.

- Homicides, threats to HRDs, extortions continue to occur.

Comment: The visit was a follow up to the EU Ambassadors' visit in September 2014. The agreed actions were not ambitious. This confirms NGOs worst fears that although an EU visit is welcome, little changes as a result. They are pushing for a long term commitment from the international community. [redacted] Section 25

I recommend that the UK continues to monitor the situation in Buenaventura [redacted] Section 27
 [redacted] Corruption, criminality and the naturalization of violence are significant challenges to overcome. You have expressed an interest in visiting to explore the above as well as commercial opportunities, which would represent welcome follow-up from the UK.

[redacted]

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From: Diptel BOGOTA (Sensitive)
Sent: 08 April 2016 13:54
To: Diptel FCO (Sensitive)
Subject: OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE COLOMBIA: POLITICAL PEACE BECKONS; CRIMINAL VIOLENCE THREATENS [DIPTTEL 1601987]
Attachments: Presencia-BACRIM-Urabefios.png

Diptel BOGOTA (Sensitive)

Foreign & Commonwealth Office Diplomatic Telegram

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Summary

The end of armed conflict between the State and politically motivated rebel groups is in sight. But the recent imposition of an enforced curfew across the northwest coast of Colombia by an organised crime group, financed by drug trafficking and illegal gold mining, shows how much of a challenge the State still faces. UK security support in these areas remains fundamental.

DETAIL

What happened

1. Clan Úsuga, a powerful criminal and drugs-trafficking organisation based predominantly in the northwest of Colombia (see map), imposed a curfew from 31 March – 1 April across 40 municipalities in six coastal departments in a blatant challenge to the authority of the State. They became ghost towns: shops, schools, and airports were closed. No-one walked in the streets.
2. This strike came a week after Clan Úsuga announced "Plan Pistola", a campaign to murder government security forces. Nine police officers and soldiers have been killed in the last 10 days, widely reported by local media.

Who are Clan Úsuga?

3. Clan Úsuga is a narco-criminal group with regional and national networks. The group is led by Dairo Antonio Úsuga, alias Otoniel, who has a \$US5m (£3m) bounty on his head. It consists of up to 3,000 armed men with presence in over half of Colombia's 32 departments - bigger than the ELN, and half the size of the FARC. Its members are both former paramilitaries and former guerrillas from FARC and EPL. The group dominate 60% of the drugs trafficking trade and 70% of the illegal mining trade. Over recent years illegal armed groups other than the FARC and ELN have been responsible for over 50% of all violent displacements. Their motives are purely criminal, though the curfew demonstrated that they will attempt to use political means to achieve their ends. They are one of the biggest sources of insecurity in Colombia.

Government response

4. The Government's response to the enforced curfew recognises this. President Santos promised that the Government would "annihilate" Clan Úsuga - "pure-blood narcos" - and certainly not afford them any kind of political treatment. The Defence Minister announced the formation of a 1,700-strong Joint Task-Force to combat the criminal gangs.

[Redacted]

Is it working?

- 5. There is evidence to back up the GoC's claim that the armed strike is a reaction to persistent military offensives against the group. The Colombian authorities have captured 789 men and seized \$125m US dollars in the last three months. The death of several high-ranking members in March may have been the final straw. However, over the last 15 months the Government have launched over 128 operations to capture Otoniel, so far without success.

[Redacted]

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How does this affect the peace process?

- 6. The upsurge in criminal violence is probably linked to progress in the peace talks. The Usuga and other groups are already moving into areas vacated by the FARC. The FARC fear more of this and are concerned for their security once they have signed a ceasefire and started demobilising.

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[Redacted]

The recent wave of murders against left-wing political groups, social activists, and human rights defenders by criminal groups BACRIM (DipTel 1601718) combined with the enforced curfew has rattled the FARC. The Secretariat issued a statement saying that "the growth of paramilitary actions...overshadows the advances of the peace process." They demanded urgent measures by the Government to prove they could "guarantee political rights without weapons".

COMMENT

- 7. The enforced curfew and recent murders have attracted huge media attention. The Government knows it has to respond robustly in order to reassure both the FARC and the general public that it can defeat criminal groups. But resources are stretched. I joined the Interior Minister on a trip to one of the affected areas.

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[Redacted]

- 8. [Redacted]

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The UK's core security priority in Colombia - to make a substantive contribution to promote stability, strengthen institutions, and tackle organised crime - remains as important as ever.

Reference
DipTel 1601718

PETER TIBBER

Authorised
Peter Tibber | HMA | [Redacted] | [Redacted]

Contact
[Redacted] | Political Secretary | [Redacted] | [Redacted]

Action
[Redacted]

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Colombia Political Round Up- November, Mon 30/11/2015 17:34

Security

Colombia conducted its first ever aerial bombardment against the drug trafficking organization *Los Urabeños* in a joint police and military operation on 3 November in Chocó. So far the government has carried out bombings against the FARC, but up until now, has refrained from targeting BACRIM out of fear it would confer political status on criminal groups. [REDACTED]

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Defence Minister Villegas reported that between January - October 2015 figures revealed that security had improved. 95% of municipalities registered no cases of extortion, and 30% registered no cases of homicide. He announced that in 91% of the country the FARC is not present, and in 96% of the country the ELN is not present. However he flagged the increase of sexual related crimes, from 10,200 in 2014 to 18,000 so far this year representing a 107% increase.

There is growing concern related to the increase of paramilitary structures present in the national territory. According to a report published by Indepaz on 5 November, there are at least 17 present in 338 municipalities. Criminal groups are reverting to the old model that goes beyond crime to the creation of links with politicians, armed structures and *para*-economics –illicit business they manage that requires territorial control.

Human Rights

Three community leaders (John Ramirez, Daniel Abril and Luis Hernandez) were killed in November. The UNCHR revealed in a report that 729 human right defenders were killed over the last 20 years, and in 2015 30 murders and 20 attempted murders were registered (51 murders according to the NGO Somos Defensores). Both statistics are above the average reported this time last year. Meanwhile, the Attorney General announced the creation of a team to prioritise investigations of crimes committed against human rights defenders and communitarian leaders.

On 6 November President Santos recognised the responsibility of the State in the disappearance of 11 people for the 30th anniversary of the Palace of Justice Siege in 1985. He officially apologised to the victims and their families as an act of remembrance and symbolic reparation, in compliance with the IACHR ruling. The victims' families asked for justice, effective investigations and the truth.

On 19 November, the Ombudsman raised the alarms over the possible reappearance of "chop houses" in Buenaventura after the finding of three mass graves with ten bodies.

On 9 November the Comptroller General's Office reported that the National Protection Unit's protection schemes for 9,638 people have cost 1.12 billion COP

(£241 million) in the last 3 years. Only 16% of them (1,532) were victims and human right defenders, as the majority of protection is for government officials.

Colombia Political Round Up- October, Wed 04/11/2015 15:37

Security

On 1 October the GoC ceased the aerial spraying of glyphosate as part of their revised anti-drugs policy. Their new plan to combat coca cultivation will now be based on the substitution of crops and the manual eradication. The Ministry for Health revealed an increase in the numbers of drug addicts in Colombia from 65,000 people attended in 2010 to 125,000 in 2014.

In one week, between 27 September and 2 October, the Army killed two of the biggest drug-dealers in Colombia: Victor Navarro alias "Megateo" and Martin Gonzalez alias "Pijarvey" in Catatumbo and Vichada. On 8 and 14 October, former paramilitary commanders alias "Diego Vecino" and alias "Juancho Prada" were released from prison after serving eight years under the Peace and Justice Law. The liberty of Diego Vecino caused controversy because the Supreme Court argued that he didn't confess all his crimes, a pre-requisite under the J+P Law.

Human Rights

On 5 October, Mayerly Angarita, leader of the organisation of survivors in Montes de Maria, was attacked by gunmen in a motorcycle. On 8 October the director of the National Forensic Institute stated that so far this year, there have been 24 victims of dismemberment in Medellin, confirming the existence of "chop houses" in the city. The FIP announced on 8 October that during the electoral process in Colombia 73 journalists were attacked.

On 22 October a group of national and foreign NGO's denounced the State's serious failings to guarantee justice to sexual violence victims before the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. According to their figures, in the absence of systems to prosecute cases of violence, 82% of the cases go unreported. Those reported have a rate of 98% rate of impunity, as underlined by the case of Jineth Bedoya.

COLOMBIA STATE VISIT: 3. THE CHALLENGES [DIPTTEL 1605027], Mon 24/10/2016 17:06

Human rights.

7. Many feel that, under President Santos's predecessor, conflict with the FARC came at the expense of human rights.

edit on 27 [REDACTED] In the last decade, a number of abuses by State forces and paramilitaries have come to light: massacres; disappearances; persecution of journalists, lawyers and students.

8. FARC have been both perpetrators and victims. In the 1980s, their political wing was picked off by right-wing paramilitaries. Today, the criminal offshoots of those paramilitaries commit some of the worst abuses, including many of the 54 murders of human rights defenders so far this year, already more than last year. Impunity in such cases remains very high.

9. The Government is now committed to ending and investigating human rights abuses. But results so far are limited and there has been a spike of attacks against human rights and civil society leaders following the peace agreement. We work in partnership with the Government and civil society partners, focusing on human rights defenders, PSVI and business and human rights.

Arauca: Political Visit April 2016, Fri 24/06/2016 20:49

Mining, land use and (lack of) development

5. In the 80's oil was discovered in the northern part of the department. This increased migration of the non-skilled labour force, resulting in a 1:7 population grow in the last 30 years. Whilst most mining is legal and pay royalties, high levels of corruption have prevented public investment in the development of infrastructure, education and health services.

Ancestral communities and small-scale farmers have conflicts of interest with the oil companies, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Locals' allegations are that the oil industry contaminates the water sources, decreases land productivity and affects traditional nomadic routes. In the past, indigenous communities were displaced by force (many by paramilitary groups or by the Army) where oil was found. Currently, after social protest has led to attention on land and cultural rights, the companies have better consultative policies and indemnities packages.

The governor wants the economy to diversify and stop depending on oil production.

State and civil society

7. For years the only contact between the state and the people has been military operations. Most of government lacks effective delivery of services, both basic services but also justice and security. The public institutions and its governance have little capacity to plan and deliver development projects. The rural police, in charge of securing rural areas and link communities with the state, only provide isolated accompaniment to productive projects without any real impact. Army operations target guerrillas and the destruction of coca crops, but many of the aerial bombardments have an adverse affect by alienating the civil population. [REDACTED]

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Colombia Political Round Up September, Tue 04/10/2016 00:36

Security

1. According to intelligence reports there are six regions that were previously under strong FARC influence where now ELN and Criminal groups are trying to seize control over drug trafficking, illegal mining and extortion. Nariño (especially, Tumaco); Cauca, northeastern Antioquia, Chocó, Meta-Guaviare and Catatumbo in Norte de Santander are the most affected areas.

Human Rights

2. The local NGO Somos Defensores denounced that at least 22 Human Rights Defenders have been killed since the end of the Peace Negotiations on 24 August. The NGO said it has been impossible to identify who is behind these crimes, but they are related to issues regarding illegal mining and illegal crops.
3. On 6 September a social leader in Corinto, Cauca was murdered. Cecilia Colcúe was a member of Marcha Patriótica and an active member of several labour and land rights organisations.
4. The Attorney General's Office declared the assassination of the journalist Jaime Garzón in 1999 a crime against humanity. The reason behind this decision is that the murder was related to the crimes committed against HRDs during that time.

Meeting with PBI: rise of paramilitary groups and threats against HRDs, Tue 29/03/2016 21:06

Recent murders of left-wing activists and HRDs

1. PBI briefed me further on the recent spate of murders against left-wing social activists, community leaders, human rights defenders, and land restitution claimants. They have joined a series of other organisations (UN OHCHR, *Somos Defensores*, CCAJAR, Cooperation for Peace) that have denounced the murders as proof of the lack of guarantees for HRDs in Colombia. In addition to the murders, threats had increased – including against women defenders. And “social cleansing” posters and pamphlets which named individuals were on the rise. In the example I attach here (received today), two organisations are well-known to this Embassy – *Marcha Patriótica* and *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*.
2. These threats are right-wing in nature and seem to support evidence and witness statements on the ground that neo-paramilitary groups are behind them. PBI have themselves met armed groups on the ground (with uniforms, boots, arm-bands denoting their group, and machine guns) who identify themselves as illegal armed groups with identical names to the supposedly disbanded paramilitary groups. I played devil's advocate – weren't these criminal or drugs trafficking groups, without an ideological agenda? PBI responded that there was a regional dynamic now, in contrast with the 90s and 00s – but that there was a clear sense that powerful economic interests aligned to criminal groups were selectively threatening and killing grass roots activists and those with a left-wing political ideology.
3. We discussed the figures – depending on the source the numbers were different as each organisation “counted” deaths differently. But whichever figures you used, the trend was highly concerning. Both the UN OCHR and the IACHR had identified this trend and decried it.
4. I explained what the UK had done (raising the cases during the Baroness Anelay visit, a potential visit to Sucre this week with the Interior Minister Cristo to visit a regional human rights table,

agreeing the EU statement). In response to their suggestion that big business was linked to some of the murders, I invited them to share any concrete examples of malpractice by UK companies.

Specific cases of concern

5. The Inter-Ecclesiastical Commission of Justice and Peace, the Colombian Catholic human rights organisation (Spanish acronym, CIJP) is a key partner of PBI – and through them, our Embassy. I travelled with Padre Franco to the humanitarian zone in Urabá last year. They are often threatened, but the threats have increased. ██████████ and another leader ██████████ have been followed and filmed in Bogotá outside their homes and the CIJP headquarters. Since ██████████
██████████ ██████████
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6. ██████████ would travel to Brussels at the end of April to speak at an EU Human Rights forum. He planned to accompany ██████████, an activist from Putumayo who had complaints against ██████████. They hoped to visit London and would no doubt raise her personal case. I asked for full information and will send once I have this.
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7. The case of Mapiripán (site of an Army massacre in 1997, now the scene of a complex business and human rights case involving ██████████) is getting worse. ██████████
██████████ ██████████
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RE: OFF SEN Farnborough Airshow 2016 - Gentle Reminder
OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE, 10/02/2016 17:18

While there have previously been concerns about human rights abuses by the Colombian military, the Colombian Armed Forces have made a concerted effort to improve education and training in human rights for all their personnel and we are satisfied that current operations are conducted according to international protocols. Given our positive bilateral relationship and our cooperation on defence issues such as counter-narcotics, we suggest that Colombia should be issued with an invitation to the Farnborough International Air Show. This decision is in line with similar decisions to invite Colombia to attend defence and security exhibitions in recent years.

Guaviare report April 16, 04/2016

Security and drugs

Guaviare has suffered greatly from "La Violencia" and the armed conflict. Given the lack of state presence, difficult geography, and geo-strategic position for drugs-trafficking, several illegal armed groups have used it as a base. Once a strong-hold of the FARC, it experienced the full force of the paramilitary violence in the 80s, 90s and 00s and is now riddled with narco-trafficking and BACRIM groups, who have pushed FARC fronts into Meta. The Ombudsman's office told us that any remaining FARC would be vulnerable after a peace deal given criminal links with authorities. They told us that 2-3,000 paras were murdered after their demobilisation in 2005/6. The Ombudsman's office told us that the day before, in San José, the BACRIM held a meeting with local business men to extort them.

Guaviare is one of the largest coca-producing departments (Nariño holds the title as #1). The majority of the rural *campesinos*, or *colonos*, live off coca. *Campesinos* we met freely admitted that unless a viable alternative was developed – infrastructure, a commercial chain to support a new crop, and a phased approach – it was their only option to support their families. Coca made the towns run: they could buy a beer in exchange for some coca leaves ("it's even acceptable to leave it as an offering at church instead of cash").

There is a fairly large security presence. There are 3,500 soldiers and 1,800 police. We met with [redacted] of the 22 Brigade, who prioritises manual coca-eradication; and operations to combat the FARC and BACRIM. The Ombudsman's Office was critical of historic corruption in both, and accused elements within the Police (SUIN) of links to BACRIM. According to one individual, people were "scared" if they had any altercation with a police officer.

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[redacted] The Fiscalia are only based in San José, with 9 Fiscales and 3 judges. Impunity was high, and they conceded that their reputation was low. But without the resources it was impossible to investigate all of the 6,000+ crimes outstanding.

The Ombudsman's Office shared their assessment of Mapiripán (Lau Hösman will join an EU trip there in early May). Historically coca was regularly flown out of Miraflores 20 times a day (one of Guaviare's four municipalities) and flown to Mapiripán, Meta. The site of a horrific paramilitary massacre in 1997, with the complicity of the Armed Forces,

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Social and Human rights

As could be expected for an area that has seen such rapid change, Guaviare is host to deep social tensions. Broadly speaking, these are between three different groups of people: *campesinos* or "colonos"; indigenous people and the landowning elite. There are 25 indigenous reserves in the department, some of them a half a million hectares (including the Nukak nomads). These were gifted by the GoC to indigenous groups after Cauca groups fought for their own rights, so the Guaviare indigenous groups have not necessarily had the same leadership to manage the large tracts of land. Combined with their lack of Spanish, this has led to use of the land by colonos and others, who have "bought" the land for e.g. a cow. There have also been cultural clashes and prejudices. We were told that the FARC have been active in informing indigenous people of their rights, not least to control the entry of the state into the reserves. However, the guerrillas, alongside paramilitaries, have contributed to the widespread displacement of indigenous people from the jungle, bringing them into much closer contact with white Colombians and living in dreadful conditions near the three urban centres.

Most now live below the poverty line in poor conditions around towns; many are displaced from their homes in the forest due to the conflict.

Campesinos want similar rights. The first ZRC in Colombia was created in eastern Guaviare. Representatives we met want an expanded zone (over existing natural reserves) to farm alternative crops (once a phased coca substitution plan had been agreed by the government). They were exercised about the rights of *campesinos* located in indigenous reserves but were quite dismissive of the rights of indigenous people as enshrined in law. They were clear that social problems for them would exist after a peace deal unless the government truly implemented every word of each agreement, particularly the rural development and illicit drugs deal. There was little trust or confidence that this would happen, so social protests were likely to continue.

Half to two thirds of the departments are registered victims (45,000 according to the Alcaldia; 60,000+ according to the local Ombudsman, which appears credible, and enjoys neutrality that other institutions lack. Their job is to monitor, inform, and alert.

Peace process

According to the Ombudsman's office the unilateral ceasefire has made a real difference in reducing levels of violence. The Army said that post-conflict would mean a move of the conflict from the rural zones to the urban centres. The low-level members would join criminal bands or form new ones, while the senior guys would be safe. Whilst the local Ombudsman believed that many of the FARC would demobilise, most people think that nothing will change: the "FARC brand" will disappear, but the criminal bands will just disperse and mutate. However, in this belief is perhaps linked to a general disaffection towards the peace process rather than a deeper analysis.

The Mayor and Governor's office have heard rumours that Guaviare will be a concentration zone and presume that this would lead to an increase in resources from the centre. Likewise, the local population expect el postconflicto to bring a flood of development – expectations that are unlikely to be fulfilled. However, if there would be one thing that central government could do to ensure a "peace dividend" it would be to demonstrate a genuine commitment to crop substitution rather than eradication. A desire repeated by all parties to whom we spoke.


HMA visits Regional human rights roundtable with Minister Cristo ***OFFICIAL_SENSITIVE, Wed 06/04/2016 17:56***

Human Rights Roundtable

1. UN OCHCHR chaired the meeting, also attended by the local Fiscalía; the Police; the Army; the Ministry of Interior (Minister Cristo and the Director for Human Rights María Paulina Riveros, also plenipotentiary to the peace talks); Guillermo Rivera; National Protection Unit; Defence Ministry; Governor of Sucre. Civil society and human rights groups were represented by Ingrid Vergara, their spokes-women. Aida Abella, leader of the Unión Patriótica (one of the few politicians who wasn't killed in the 90s) was also present.
2. Minister Cristo opened the meeting by confirming national government commitment to human rights. He rejected and condemned recent killings. Prevention of threats should improve; and the National Protection unit was working on better collective measures.
3. Ingrid Vergara responded. Today there was an armed strike. But we couldn't let the opportunity for peace pass. All of civil society were behind this. However, threats and attacks against HRDs had increased in Sucre. There had been 28 murders (13 of HRDs, 15 in "social cleansing") and 54 attacks – 2 a day – since the beginning of 2016. "Neo-paramilitary" groups were behind it. Although murders had decreased since a decade ago, the presence of armed groups was on the up. This stopped victim's participation and frustrated the peace process. In Sucre, there had been 30 murders [*comment: not clear if separate to the 28 listed above*] and all were "sicariato" – drive-by assassinations. Impunity was 100%. Ingrid herself was threatened with death – including this morning – and asked for protection. Civil society wanted:
 - Open a "CERREM" in Sucre (a first-response local National Protection Unit)
 - The local Fiscales had to investigate all crimes and take them seriously
 - Develop clear individual and collective protection measures
 - National Government to be quicker to declaim local violence – it had taken them 2 days to respond to armed strike
4. Aida Abella made an emotional and charged intervention. She accused the Fiscalía of corruption and impunity – everyone knew who had killed certain people, but because they were powerful and linked to politicians nothing would happen to them [REDACTED]

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 She accused the Army of being complicit – why did they not arrest the orchestrators of the armed strike? The authorities in the room had blood on their hands. A different HRD asked why there were no local authorities present – not a single Mayor from any of the 25 municipalities.

5. Cristo took action. He ordered i) the NPU to look into opening a brand new CERREM ii) that the NPU offer Ingrid Vergara and her family immediate protection iii) that the local Fiscalía urgently investigate each murder iv) that the 12 most serious cases be immediately transferred to the Fiscal in Bogotá.