



Remarks by Francisco de Roux, Truth Commission's President, before the UN Security Council

Just over two years ago I was before you, members of the Security Council, when the COVID pandemic had not struck yet. The Security Council had already come to Colombia. You had trusted the truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition system that the Colombian Truth Commission formed along with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Unit for the Search of Missing Persons.

I come before you again, on the occasion of the quarterly report on the peace process in Colombia produced by the Mission to Support the peace process led by *Carlos Ruiz Massieu*. I have come to tell you that we have concluded the task we were assigned through the peace agreement between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, Farc-EP. A task that you have endorsed unanimously. This is the conclusion of this task.

On behalf of my colleagues at the Truth Commission, and gathering the feelings of millions of Colombians who have been victims of the war, I bring words of gratitude and appreciation to all of the countries gathered here at the United Nations and to the citizens of the world.

We bring words of truth from Colombia that have implications on the entire community of nations. It is a painful yet courageous message that shows, from the stance of humans affected by war, and from that wounded nature, a bold and mandatory way to build a peaceful nation together based on our differences, and a new world that fills today and tomorrow's children with joy, a new world where there is room for hope.

For four years, we have heard that the internal war in Colombia was over. We have listened to over 30,000 individual and collective testimonies coming from all sides of a divided country, and we have read over 1,000 reports mostly sent by victim communities in Colombia and from 24 countries where there are exiled Colombians. A staggering 10 million people have been affected by this war in different ways. The weapons used in the war killed 450,000 people between 1985 and 2018. And 80 percent of the people who were affected, both survivors and assassinated people, were not soldiers or guerrilla members, but unarmed civilians. That is what war is like. It is always against the civilian population.

We have listened to multiple testimonies from 50,000 kidnapped people and thousands of children who were forced to go to war, where the guerrillas had maximum responsibility; and we have heard about forced disappearances and the so-called false positives, where the State has direct responsibility. We have been to those places where over 4,000 massacres, some in which over 100 people were killed, took place, where entire towns were destroyed, and where the paramilitary groups had the highest participation in acts of brutality. We have walked alongside groups that are part of the

over 8 million displaced people; alongside women who are part of the thousands whose bodies were used as battlefields; of peasants who have been forced off their lands, and alongside indigenous, Afro-Colombian and Romani communities who have experienced the armed conflict more severely due to increasing racism.

It is painful to know that this situation in Colombia was known. The world knew about it, we saw it on TV, we heard it on the radio, but we allowed it to occur for 50 years, as if this brutality weren't affecting ourselves. The exception was that many people didn't allow fear to scare them and they still scream: "Stop this war, everyone must stop, stop now". And they, like the mothers of the non-combatant young people who were killed and then presented by their perpetrators as guerrilla members killed in combat, claim: "Who gave that order?"

But we have done more than just listening. We have searched answers to the questions: Why did this happen? What impact did it have on people, on nature, on democracy? Who caused it and how? What can we do to prevent it from happening again? The search for answers to these questions has allowed us to understand the reason for the damage caused to life, to the quality of life, to democracy, to culture and to nature, and to understand why the conflict tries to prolong and continue, as shown by the over 1,000 social leaders that have been killed as well as the 333 men and women of the former Farc-EP guerrilla who signed the peace agreement.

We have understood that war is not simple, and that armed actors are part of a system where decisions are conditioned or determined by cultural, political, economic, military, bureaucratic and criminal interests and purposes. We have found that an ethical void lies between the origin and continuation of a war, where the human greatness of each person, each family, each community and each living being, and where the incomparable absolute value of every man and every woman, which is worth more than all the weapons in the world, is forgotten. War damages everything it touches. It hurts both those who are attacked and the attackers.

We have understood that in the Colombian case, it is necessary to change the security system. From the beginning, over 60 years ago, it was established that security was guaranteed with weapons and that conflicts among citizens, which are a political conflict to be solved through dialog and negotiation, had to be solved with weapons. Therefore, our security became an armed security, which is a never-ending issue, because armed security always requires more weapons and more justifications in terms of the numbers of dead people. We created armed security to secure power, devices, properties, companies, which of course, have to be secured, and even security to protect armed bureaucracy itself. But there was no security to protect people, human beings. That is why in Colombian war, out of every 10 dead people, 8 were civilians. Jungles, rivers, mountains, were victims of antipersonnel mines, as well as thousands of Colombian young people on both sides of the conflict, who faced each other on a useless war. That is why we request army and police for peace, not for war. And we ask the international community to give us nothing for war. We want to turn Colombia into a global reconciliation paradigm, after so much suffering.



Drug trafficking also influenced the war in Colombia. And since we are in a "war mode", we take from other drug-consuming countries the idea that drug trafficking is a national security matter and, therefore, it is a matter to be solved through war. And we join those who called for the destruction of the peasant population that resorts to coca crops because it was impoverished and dispossessed of land and capital, although the peasant population is the weakest link in the chain of interests that fuel drug trafficking.

From the outcry of the victims in Colombia, we ask for collaboration, based on the shared responsibility of the drug-consuming nations, to capture the biggest drug lords and submit them to transitional justice, where they publicly declare the truth about the political, economic, military and banking alliances involved in their businesses, and where they are committed to providing reparations to all the victims with their own money. And we also invite you and many others around the world to move toward market regulation and global public health and education on an issue that affects everyone, such as collective protection from COVID.

We ask you to understand the connection between drug trafficking and corruption. Because criminal money bribes governors, majors, judges, and police, guerrilla and military members. And it contributes to generalizing corruption at other levels.

We have understood that the solution to the armed conflict is based on respect for each person as an equal being and that we must respect each indigenous and Afro-Colombian boy and girl with the same determination we respect presidents, rich people, doctors, personalities and army generals. Let us stop worshiping celebrities and dignitaries. Let us love and respect each other as bearers of the same dignity. In Colombia and all around the world, let us all contribute to promoting a new ethics based on human dignity that should be supported from all spiritual traditions.

Members of the United Nations Security Council: we are optimistic. Our youth in Colombia has taken up the legacy. A youth fighting for peace and protection of all life forms. In our country, over one million women, indigenous and Afro-Colombians, educators and religious leaders, LGBTIQ+ people, universities and entrepreneurs, judges and jurists, artists and unions, human rights defenders and churches are joining in. There is still a long road ahead that Colombia has started to walk by accepting the historical truth about its own tragedy without fear, and the determination to look ahead, towards the future that we are going to build by embracing our wounds to enrich our own culture, as people who are passionate about creativity, art, freedom and production of life.

I hope the lesson taught by Colombia keeps everyone away from every war for good and leads us to passionately seek the truth and dignity of human beings. There is a future for Colombia and the whole world **as long as there is truth.**

New York, July 14, 2022.