

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL PBI Colombia - www.pbicolombia.org

Bogota, 7 October 2016

BUILDING PEACE IN COLOMBIA IS TOP PRIORITY

Peace Brigades International (PBI) – The Colombia Project joins the thousands of Colombians who in recent days have been demonstrating their support, in various cities, for efforts to bring peace and social justice to their country, calling for a solution to the uncertainty that the country is currently experiencing.

For more than 22 years PBI has been present in Colombia, accompanying those who have directly suffered the consequences of the armed conflict and have been victims of political violence in its many forms. Tragically, PBI has witnessed the effects of the war and its impacts on those who tirelessly defend human and environmental rights. These same human rights defenders are among those who have been proposing, day after day, proposals and alternatives for a country that is more just and free of violence.

PBI continues to back efforts to build a peaceful Colombia without human rights violations and with guarantees for political participation. We reject all attacks against human rights defenders, among them women, leaders of indigenous and afrodescendant communities and smallholder farmers.

PBI calls upon all sides to the current conflict and the international community, to guarantee that under no conditions should the bilateral ceasefire be suspended, nor that a flare-up of violence occur. At this time, we are concerned about the effects that this unstable situation could have on the safety of the civilian population, and in particular, the risks facing the communities most affected by the conflict, as well as the human rights organizations that work in rural areas.

In any new platform for dialogue that may be created, PBI calls for the inclusion of the conflict's victims and the social organizations that accompany them right from the beginning; their central role has been reiterated throughout this important negotiation process. These same victims, in various regions and municipalities of the country where PBI has a presence, are those who showed their strong support for the accords in the plebiscite of October 2, demonstrating their position in favor of building a peaceful country with social justice, preferring dialogue to weapons, and opening important pathways to reconciliation.

In this crucial moment it is of critical importance for the international community to: demonstrate decisively that it stands with building peace (an internationally recognized right reflected in article 22 of Colombia's own Constitutional Charter), and make all possible efforts to ensure that the process continues in an inclusive manner.

The international community has the moral responsibility to ensure an end to human rights violations and a continued path towards a durable and sustainable peace that prioritizes the rights to truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-repetition. In this regard it is of fundamental importance for the international community to express its commitment to guaranteeing the institutional framework of Colombia.

PBI appreciates your continued support for our work to protect human rights defenders and displaced communities.

22 Years protecting human rights defenders in Colombia.