

## DESPITE THE LOSS OF “YES” IN THE COLOMBIAN REFERENDUM, WOMEN CONTINUE TO RESIST AND PROMOTE PEACE IN COLOMBIA

October 5, 2016



WILPF Colombia and other women's organisations attending the agreement signing ceremony between Colombia's government and the FARC-EP, on 26 September, few days prior the referendum in Cartagena, Colombia.

As a feminist and pacifist international organisation that has worked for peace and disarmament since 1915, WILPF continues to work to the end the longest armed conflict in the American continent.

Although an agreement was reached between Colombia's government and the FARC-EP to end 52 years of fighting, which was celebrated in Cartagena, it was only until the referendum on Sunday October 2<sup>nd</sup> that the agreement was going to become real and its implementation phase to start the following day. But reality hit the Colombian people; voters for “NO”, which were against the agreement, won the referendum. “For women victims, this was a slap in the face and we missed an important opportunity for peace and reconciliation, because for the first time, a gender perspective was included in the text of the final agreement. For the first time, women's rights were recognised,” remarks Katherine Ronderos, Director of WILPF Colombia (Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad, [LIMPAL Colombia](#)).

She continues, “Most importantly, sexual violence was included as crime against humanity. There will not be amnesty for sexual violence.” These achievements are credit to the great momentum built by women’s organisations, the support of the international community, legal instruments such as the UNSCR 1325 and the work of many women peace builders who have dedicated their lives to women and peace in Colombia.

After the official news of the results of the referendum, there is uncertainty on the future of the process, if the agreement will be revised and updated, if there will be another referendum or if there is any timeline to finish this off. WILPF Colombia fears that the time runs out and therefore misses the momentum for a peace agreement.

Even more worrying were the public statements by the “NO” Campaign leader, the ex-president Uribe, few hours after the official announcement of the wining of “NO”, mentioning their reiteration to “the need to stimulate family values without putting them at risk. Those family values defended by religious leaders and moral pastors”.

WILPF Colombia is seriously concerned about this statement and the alliances this political party has with conservative religious leaders in order to backlash the advancements on women’s rights and the rights of LGBTI victims so far achieved in this agreement. Nevertheless, Colombian women will continue, as always, resisting and working for peace with women’s participation, making sure that women’s rights are at the center of the final version of the agreement.

“It is now important that the results we have achieved to date in terms of gender equality and women’s rights in the agreement stay. Although we succeeded in incorporating the language of women’s rights, it will be a great challenge for us to follow and drive implementation. Women’s participation in decisions on the implementation of the peace agreement is crucial for a sustainable and lasting peace in Colombia,” says Katherine Ronderos.

This is a historic time for Colombia. WILPF around the world stands in solidarity with our sisters in Colombia. We thank them for their work, dedication and pursuit of feminist peace!

Learn more about [WILPF Colombia](#).

## REVISIT OUR WEBINAR PACIFIST FEMINISM: THE CASE OF COLOMBIA

In the midst of the Colombian conflict negotiation process, the role of women in civil society has been fundamental, not only in demanding the participation of women on both sides of the table but also in the inclusion of proposals from women in the same agreements.

On 10 June 2016, WILPF held a webinar on the gains made by women in the negotiating process and, at the same time, creating a space for reflections on what the peace process brings to Colombia and the rest of the Latin American region, and even more importantly to the work of women and WILPF in general.

The webinar is in Spanish. Find it here: [Pacifist Feminism: The Case of Colombia](#)