

“There is Future if There is Truth”: The Colombian Truth Commission Presents its Final Report in Geneva

July 14th, 2022

On July 14th, 2022, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition of Colombia presented its final report in Geneva in an event that gathered victims of the conflict exiled in Switzerland and other civil society actors. The session began with the projection of a series of videos on the work of the commission, followed by the opening remarks of the head of the Dealing with the Past program at swisspeace, Lisa Ott, who welcomed the attendees and introduced the event.

Following her intervention, Diana Betancourt, a member of *Nodo Suiza* (The Swiss group supporting the Colombian Truth Commission), introduced the first of two panels. The latter included the participation of Andrea Pérez González, representing the voices of the second generation of Colombians in exile, and Beatriz Gómez, a former representative of the Patriotic Union who was forced into exile years ago and is currently living in Switzerland. In their interventions, they shared what the publication of the final report had meant to them. Beatriz, in particular, emphasized the impact that sharing her testimony with the commission had on her.

The second panel, also moderated by Diana Betancourt, featured three commissioners: Carlos Martín Beristain, Alejandro Valencia and Leyner Palacios, who presented the Final Report and spoke about their findings and recommendations. They discussed the title of the report, elaborated on the chapter on exile, brought up the need to enhance human security in the country, and referred to the ethnic focus of their work. Later, they were joined by Dorys Adila, who has been appointed as a member of the follow-up committee of the commission. She explained what the committee is and what tasks it will perform and shared a message of hope for the future.

The panels were followed by two rounds of questions and comments from the audience in which victims and other attendees had the chance to directly speak to the commissioners and share their views and questions with them. In their interactions, they brought up the issue of reconciliation and referred to the need for continued dialogue.

The event was closed with a minute's silence for all the victims of the conflict in Colombia, followed by the performance of María Isabel Arango and a symbolic act that finished with all attendees holding hands in a circle. After that, the participants had the opportunity to visit an art exhibition displayed outside which included paintings and other materials by victims of the conflict.

The Colombian commission started its work in 2018 to investigate the conflict and the human rights violations committed in the country between 1958 and 2016. In this context, the commission has worked intensively to collect and evaluate the testimonies of victims, survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators of the conflict. A significant contribution to this has been made by the Colombian diaspora, including that in

Switzerland, whose views are the focus of one of the chapters of its recently published final report.

The document explains the reasons for and consequences of forced displacement and contributes to the recognition and dignity of those Colombians who had to flee to countries like Switzerland. In this respect, the event held in Geneva on July 14th sought to recognize these victims and give them a platform to interact with the commission.

Ahead of the conclusion of the commission's mandate, the commissioners and the victims who were present in the event stressed the importance of building up on the work done and reflected on the need to continue working towards the consolidation of peace in the country.