Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Participant Biographies

Colombia: Challenges for Peace and Human Rights

Ángela María Ramírez Rincón is the Executive Director of the Barometer Initiative in Colombia at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She is a lawyer with a specialization in university teaching and research and a master's degree in International Human Rights Law from American University. She has worked in academia as a professor and researcher on topics related to human rights protection. Additionally, she has served as a consultant for organizations such as the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF) on issues related to the protection of Indigenous peoples' rights and gender-sensitive judicial investigations, among others. For seven years, she worked in the public sector in Colombia, holding positions in the Presidential Human Rights Program, the National Agency for Legal Defense of the State, and the Ministry of Justice.

Monsignor Hector Fabio Henao has supported several peace processes in Colombia and was Director of the Social Pastoral (Colombian Caritas) for more than 20 years. He has been a promoter of negotiated peace solutions and for years has defended the need for reparations for the victims of the armed conflict. Since 2022 he has been the Episcopal Conference of Colombia Delegate for Church-Colombian State Relations and is the Director of the Institute for Peacebuilding Foundation (FICONPAZ). He currently serves as the representative of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia in peace dialogues with different armed groups such as the ELN, CNB and others.

Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli is Director for the Andes and is a human rights and anti-racism advocate at the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), an independent organization that promotes human rights and justice in the U.S. foreign policy framework in the region, where she directs work in Colombia, Brazil, and Argentina. Her work focuses on dismantling illegal armed groups, promoting peace agreements and anti-racism measures, protecting social leaders, seeking 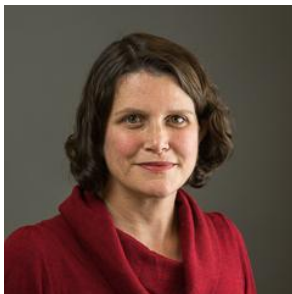justice for atrocities, and defending labor rights. Before WOLA, she worked with Peace Brigades International, where she provided unarmed physical accompaniment to defenders and communities during the conflict in Colombia. Gimena has received numerous awards for her work, including from the Colombian Senate, Afro-Colombian coalitions, and the Mayor's Office of Washington, DC. She is the author of numerous publications and appears regularly in the media.

Marino Córdoba, recognized Afro-Colombian leader, lived as a political refugee in the United States for twelve years. He is the founder and legal representative of the National Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES), which brings together more than 126 organizations and community councils, and which has made visible the humanitarian tragedy that affects this population in the framework of the internal armed conflict in Colombia. He is also founder and member of the National Afro-Colombian Council of Peace (CONPA) and the Ethnic Commission for Peace and Territorial Defense, institutions that negotiated the Ethnic Chapter that emerged from the peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP in Havana, which culminated in the signing of the Final Peace Agreement in 2016. He is a lawyer and has a master's degree in human rights. He has received various human rights awards, and he is a recipient of the Sájarov Prize from the European Parliament.

Moderator

Clare Ribando Seelke is a Specialist in Latin American Affairs at the Congressional Research Service (CRS), a non-partisan research agency located in the Library of Congress that serves Members of Congress, their committees, and staff. She has over twenty years of experience in research and analysis on U.S.-Latin American relations, security issues in Latin America, U.S. foreign assistance, and political developments in Mexico and Central America.