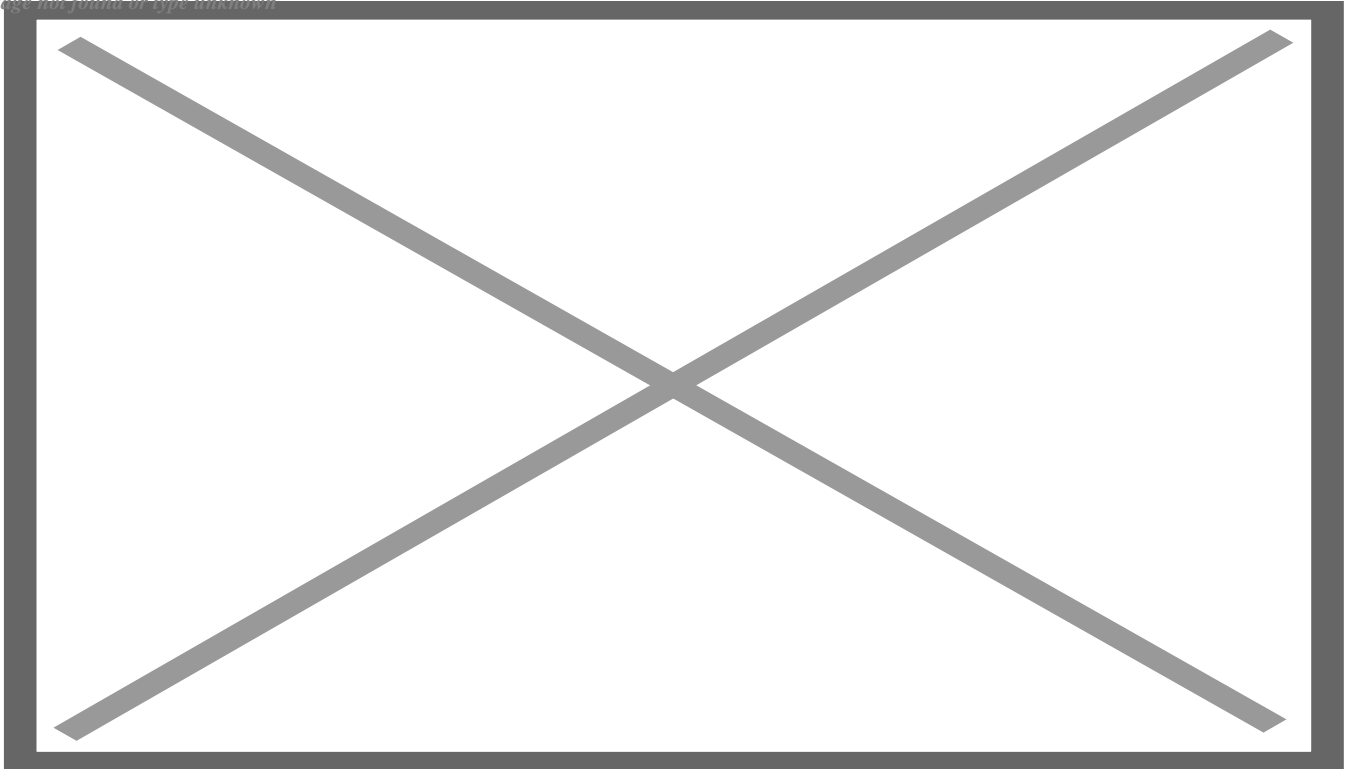


Colombia's determination to consolidate peace

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By Maria Josefina Arce

Many are the challenges that the government of President Gustavo Petro has faced and continues to face in its effort to achieve total peace in Colombia, a nation bled by decades of armed conflict that has left tens of thousands of victims and millions displaced.

But the current government is not relenting in its efforts to make its desire for peace a reality for all Colombians, an endeavor recognized by countries and international organizations such as the UN.

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, highlighted the achievements of the last months and Colombia's determination to consolidate peace.

In the next few hours, the most recent report on the UN Verification Mission in the South American country, which covers the period from September 27 to December 26 of last year, will be presented to the UN Security Council.

The document highlights the progress in this period of the implementation of the historic 2016 Peace Agreement between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the former guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, which was paralyzed during the mandate of Iván Duque, from 2018 to August 2022.

Duque, who always maintained a critical position on the agreement, did not do much to consolidate peace on Colombian territory. His presidency was characterized by a lack of will to protect human rights defenders and former guerrillas in the process of reincorporation into society.

With the integral rural reform, contemplated in the agreement, hardly any progress was made during the four years of his administration.

Petro's arrival in August 2022 to the Casa de Nariño turned the situation around. The report highlights the purchase, formalization and delivery of land, and emphasizes the acquisition by the authorities of almost five THOUSAND hectares of land for former combatants.

The government's actions to comply with the 2016 Peace Agreement have been reinforced by the dialogue with the insurgent National Liberation Army. So far, five cycles of negotiations have taken place, in which important agreements have been reached, such as a bilateral and national ceasefire and the participation of all Colombians in the construction of total peace.

Petro's government also maintains a dialogue with the so-called Central General Staff, composed of former guerrillas who did not embrace the 2016 peace agreement. Colombia has taken significant steps towards total peace, and although there are many present and future challenges, there is a clear determination of the government presided by Petro to continue advancing on that path.

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