

Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union
for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

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Dear Baroness Ashton,

EU MUST URGE COLOMBIA TO IMPLEMENT UNSC RESOLUTION 1325

On the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325, I should like to draw your attention to continuing sexual violence in Colombia's armed conflict. In a new Amnesty International report, *Colombia: Hidden from justice. Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, a follow-up report* (available [here](#)), we highlight the Colombian authorities' failure to tackle conflict-related sexual violence.

In Colombia's armed conflict, sexual violence is inflicted on women to sow terror in communities, force people to flee their land, control the sexual and reproductive rights of female combatants, exploit women and girls as sexual slaves, and take revenge on the enemy. The National Institute for Legal Medicine & Forensic Sciences carried out 22,597 examinations into suspected cases of sexual violence last year. However, armed actors were identified as the alleged perpetrators in only 72 of these cases, demonstrating widespread under-reporting.

Over the past year, several legislative initiatives were launched in Congress that could help tackle sexual violence. But the problem is the lack of implementation. In practice, the authorities frequently ignore or obstruct victims of sexual violence. Investigations are usually held by local judicial offices, which lack the required expertise and resources. Some survivors experience a lack of continuity, with new prosecutors appointed to their cases at key moments. Little has been done to give victims access to protection programmes, and perpetrators continue to threaten and rape women human rights defenders with impunity. Efforts to tackle these crimes are further undermined by Colombia's failure to investigate them as war crimes and/or crimes against humanity. Moreover, some legislative initiatives, such as the 'legal framework for peace', actually threaten to hinder efforts to bring perpetrators to justice.

Without a commitment to end sexual violence, there can be no lasting peace in Colombia. So it is vital that Colombia fully implements UNSC Resolution 1325. What is more, the **EU Strategic Framework for Human Rights & Democracy** states that the EU will "**fight vigorously against impunity for serious crimes of concern to the international community, including sexual violence committed in connection with armed conflict**". Accordingly, we urge the EU to put the topic of conflict-related sexual violence on the agenda of the next EU-Colombia Human Rights Dialogue. We also call on the EU to press the Colombian Government to:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan of action to tackle violence against women
- Support the bill before Congress "to guarantee access to justice for victims of sexual violence, especially sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict"
- Repeal constitutional reforms, such as the 'legal framework for peace' and measures to strengthen the military justice system, which will increase impunity
- Bring to justice all those responsible for crimes under international law

I look forward to your response and would be pleased to provide any further information you might require.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger
Director

Cc:

Christian Leffler, European External Action Service, Managing Director for the Americas

Véronique Arnault, European External Action Service, Director for Human Rights and Democracy

Tomás Dupla Del Moral, European External Action Service, Director for the Americas

Belen Martinez Carbonell, European External Action Service, Head of Division for the Andean Countries

Maria Wilhelmina Josepha Antonia Van Gool, EU Ambassador to Colombia

Rafael Gelabert, Chair of the Council Working Party on Latin America