

# CON lídEres hAY PAZ

SUPPORT THEIR WORK. PROTECT THEIR LIVES.



An Action Group Guide

**WOLA**

Advocacy for Human Rights in the Americas









## INTRODUCTION

# About the Campaign

**CON LÍDERES HAY PAZ** is a digital advocacy campaign launched by the Washington Office on Latin America with the goal of supporting the work of social leaders fighting for peace in Colombia. The work is done in communication and partnership with social leaders in Colombia. To pave the way towards a more peaceful, just, and equal society, the Colombian government must bring to justice those who threaten them and their communities, while increasing protections and supporting the work of social leaders. The international community—including the U.S. Congress, the European Union, the United Nations, civil society groups, and press—must play an important role in pushing the Colombian state to take prompt action in carrying out these efforts.



## SUGGESTED STRUCTURE

This guide is meant to engage groups who are interested in the **CON LÍDERES HAY PAZ** campaign and wish to connect more deeply with the stories. This guide is meant to help action groups better understand the situation on-the-ground and organize effectively to support the work of social leaders in Colombia. This guide follows the four **REBUILDING PEACE** podcast episodes as a starting point for discussion and organizing action. Podcast transcripts are accessible on the campaign website.

A remote action group may wish to listen to the episodes on their own time and review the suggested readings before each meeting. Feel free to adapt as appropriate to your classroom, religious, and secular working groups, civil society workshops, and more.

# Opening the Action Group



Colombia's historic 2016 peace accords was a remarkable achievement.

It ended the world's longest conflict—a fifty-year affair between the Colombian state, right-wing paramilitaries, and a guerrilla movement known as the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) that killed more than 200,000 people and displaced another 8 million.

But the peace accords also did so much more than end a long and bloody conflict.

They laid out a detailed roadmap that, if implemented, would tackle the structural challenges that fueled the Colombian conflict: inequality, racism, and violence. They committed the Colombian state to providing basic services in remote areas of the country where the violence had been most acute. For a group of enterprising and committed people in these communities, the peace accords were a galvanizing moment: they began the hard, grassroots work of building peace in Afro-Colombian, Indigenous, and rural towns and villages all over Colombia.

In the years since, these people—known as social leaders—have hustled to implement key components of the peace accords in their communities. Social leaders have organized communities to implement voluntary coca substitution programs in regions controlled by cocaine traffickers. They've secured land, labor, and environmental rights in communities where extractive industries like mining operate. They've sought justice for the human rights abuses committed against their neighbors during the conflict.

Every day, their work has challenged the entrenched interests of powerful and violent groups: drug traffickers, economic and political elites, and illicit armed groups. And as they've waited for the Colombian state to hold up its end of the bargain, they've faced rising danger.

Thousands of social leaders have been threatened by these groups, and since 2016, more than 500 have been assassinated as a result of their work. For the communities they leave behind, the death of a social leader often means an end to the fight for peace: neighborhoods are cowed into silence, voluntary coca substitution



## MORE THAN 500 SOCIAL LEADERS HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES SINCE 2016

Social leaders are murdered for working to build peace. There have been more than 60 massacres in 2020 alone in many of the communities they work in. Twice as many as in 2018

efforts are abandoned, the push to secure fundamental rights is halted, and violent actors reassert control over entire communities.

The end result? With each additional killing of a social leader, Colombia's grasp on peace becomes more tenuous.

**To resurrect the promise of peace and equality, the Colombian government must spare no expense in bringing to justice those who threaten social leaders and their communities.** Today, the vast majority of perpetrators and masterminds behind these murders have yet to be found and convicted. For those who seek



to kill social leaders, the message is clear: if you kill a social leader, the Colombian government will not punish you.

**To ensure a sustained peace, the Colombian government must stop undermining the work of social leaders by defunding or deprioritizing key elements of the peace accords.** President Iván Duque has systematically subverted efforts for peace in Colombia. His emphasis on aerial eradication of coca fields undermines the work of social leaders supporting the nearly 100,000 Colombian families who have signed up for voluntary coca substitution programs established by the peace accords. His budget cuts to key peace accord agencies tasked with truth and reconciliation sabotage the work of social leaders advocating for victims' rights. His propensity for creating new development schemes, while ignoring the ones laid out by the peace accords, ignores the input and work of social leaders championing land, labor, and environmental rights.

**The international community must press Colombia to both protect social leaders, and support their work by fully implementing the peace accords. Without the work of social leaders in Afro-Colombian, Indigenous, and rural communities, peace in Colombia is not possible.**

### SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What does the term “social leader” mean to you?

What kind of person would be a “social leader”?

How much do you know about the history of conflict in Colombia?

What additional context does this campaign introduction provide?

How does this campaign connect or reflect you and your involvement in the community?

## RESOURCES



**CON LÍDERES  
HAY PAZ**  
website



**REBUILDING  
PEACE**  
podcast link



The campaign's  
**Instagram  
Guide**



PDF: **What  
Happens When a  
Social Leader is  
Killed?**

## SUGGESTED ACTIONS



### Share

the Instagram  
Guide link to five other  
people you know



### Follow

WOLA on  
social media



### Subscribe

to the mailing list



## PODCAST EPISODE GUIDES

Episode 1: Leyner Palacios Asprilla - A Vision for Peace

Episode 2: Danelly Estupiñán - A Vision for Equality

Episode 3: Erlendy Cuero Bravo - A Vision for Community

Episode 4: Darío Mejía - A Vision for the Future