

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 22, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

The conflict between Colombia and the FARC, the oldest, largest, and best financed guerilla organization in Latin America, has lasted over half a century. Over 200,000 people have died, over one million people are internally displaced, and millions have suffered globally due to the criminal activities and the tons of cocaine trafficked by the FARC over the years.

Even as the Santos government engaged in negotiations with the FARC beginning in 2012, the organization's illicit activity continued unabated. We must not allow the FARC, a U.S. designated foreign terrorist-organization, to use its narco-terror profits to undermine the democratic process in Colombia. The United States must continue to label the FARC for what it truly is - a Foreign Terrorist Organization – and must not remove it from this list. This would legitimize the terror group and jeopardize Colombia's stability. According to the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) 2016 National Drug Threat Assessment:

“As of early 2016 the FARC continues to engage in the large-scale production and exportation of cocaine from Colombia....cocaine availability and use in the United States increased between 2014 and 2015 and are likely to continue increasing in the near term. This increase is due to elevated levels of coca cultivation and potential pure cocaine production in Colombia, the primary source for cocaine seized in the United States.”

Finding justice for the victims of the FARC is important for Colombia and the United States. The Department of State's 2016 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) indicated that “Since December 17, 1997, Colombia has extradited approximately 1,870 individuals to the United States, with the majority of the individuals wanted for drug crimes.” We want to ensure that extraditions are not impacted by this agreement in the interest of justice for U.S. victims of the FARC's criminal network. Additionally, we are greatly concerned about the possibility that FARC leader Simon Trinidad may be released as part of this agreement. We vehemently oppose the release of Trinidad, a criminal who is responsible for taking three Americans hostage and who was convicted in U.S. courts and sentenced to 60 years in prison.

The future security cooperation between our nations can be hindered by Colombia labeling drug trafficking as a “political crime”, which is not in the best interests of Colombia nor the United States. This substantial rise in coca production will lead to a large infusion of funds to the FARC and its members may be able to wield substantial and undue influence over the political process in Colombia. In April, *The Economist* reported that “according to an unpublished study by government analysts, even after paying to maintain its fighters the FARC still had assets worth 33 trillion pesos (\$10.5 billion) in 2012.” Once firmly entrenched within the inner circles of the government, the FARC will pose an increased risk to the security and stability of the region and to U.S. national security.

As ardent and longstanding supporters of Colombia and the U.S.-Colombia relationship, we are concerned that much of the progress that has been established over the past few decades may be upended should FARC officials be granted the opportunity to run for public office in spite of their criminal activities. There has been strong, bi-partisan support for Plan Colombia, the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, and for policies that seek to strengthen Colombia’s democratic institutions. This agreement should be about completely dismantling the FARC’s criminal network, ending the violence in Colombia, and bringing to justice those responsible for the bloodshed.

With a peace deal that sits on the cusp of being implemented, we believe that any deal between Colombia and the FARC must ensure justice for the FARC’s victims, hold the FARC members accountable for their countless crimes, and strengthen Colombia’s long-standing democratic values.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Member of Congress



ALBIO SIRES
Member of Congress



MARIO DIAZ-BALART
Member of Congress



CARLOS CURBELO
Member of Congress



TED YOHO
Member of Congress



RON DESANTIS
Member of Congress