

## 'Historic' day as last FARC-EP members gather to turn in arms – UN mission in Colombia

20 February 2017 – About 300 members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) today arrived in central Colombia's Agua Bonita zone, bringing the number to close to 6,900, to lay down their arms under United Nations verification, and to begin a transition to social, economic and political life, the UN Mission in the country said today.

"In the past 19 days they rode cars, buses, boats or walked some 8,700 kilometres [...] across the country, accompanied by over 860 [members] of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM)," read a news release from the UN Mission in Colombia.

The Mission's Chief Observer and MVM coordinator, Major General Javier Pérez Aquino, called the day "historic."

"The UN Mission in Colombia and the MVM consider that the FARC-EP's decision to move into the zones [...] in spite of the limited logistics in the majority of them [...] very positive," he said.

"This decision considerably reduces the possibility of armed contact [...] and we also hope that their presence will accelerate the construction works in these camps, creating the appropriate conditions to continue with the process that will lead to their reinsertion into the social, economic and political life," he added.

The Chief Observer also noted that despite limited logistics, the deadline for the completion of the laying down of arms [...] 180 days after the Final Agreement, which came into force on 1 December [...] stands.

***Working hand-in-hand so that 'our children and grandchildren live in a conflict-free country'***

In Colombia's capital, Bogotá, as well as at eight regional and 26 local sites, FARC-EP and Government members, along with 350 UN observers, are working together to verify the parties' commitments towards the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

"We work together to implement the Final Agreement and I feel hopeful that this process will lead to a country with more social justice," said 45-year-old Esperanza Fajardo, who joined FARC-EP in the 1990's, now working with Government and UN Mission counterparts.

Mayor Alejandro Cruz, from the Government, echoed: "I feel very committed to this process because I want our children and grandchildren to live in a conflict-free country."

Mr. Cruz was twice injured in combat with the FARC-EP and bears a large scar on his chest while Ms. Fajardo joined the rebel group to escape the killings of left-wing *Unión Patriótica* political affiliates.

In early October 2016, Colombian voters narrowly rejected the historic peace accord between the Government and the FARC-EP. That deal led to a cessation of hostilities and agreements on key issues such as political participation, land rights, illicit drugs and victims' rights and transitional justice. The two sides signed a new agreement in late November.

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## [Long-time Russian Ambassador to UN, Vitaly Churkin, dies suddenly in New York](#)



Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, briefing journalists late last year at Headquarters. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

20 February 2017 – The General Assembly today held a moment of silence honouring the memory of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, who died suddenly this morning in New York.

During a meeting of the Assembly on the reform of the world body, Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative, Petr Ilichev, informed those present about Ambassador Churkin's sudden passing.

The seasoned diplomat, who would have turned 65 tomorrow, served as Permanent Representative since 2006.

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## [DR Congo: UN rights chief calls on Government to halt violence by security forces](#)

20 February 2017 – The United Nations human rights chief today called on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to take immediate steps to halt

widespread human rights violations, including apparent summary executions, by the country's armed forces.

It is time to stop a blunt military response that does nothing to tackle the root causes of the conflict between the Government and local militias but instead targets civilians on the basis of their presumed links to the militias, said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a news release from his office (OHCHR).

Mr. Zeid said that there are multiple, credible allegations of massive human rights violations in the provinces of Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental and Lomami amid a sharp deterioration in security situation there.

A local militia linked to a customary chief, Kamuina Nsapu, who was killed by the African country's armed forces in August 2016 has been increasingly active in Kasai Central Province, mostly attacking government buildings and churches, and national security forces. The militia also reportedly recruits and uses children.

According to OCHR, horrific video footage emerged over the weekend apparently showing soldiers of the Government security forces, known as FARDC, shooting repeatedly and without warning at men and women, who purportedly belonged to the militia in Muenza Nsapu village.

The UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC is not in a position to verify the origin and authenticity of the video. However, the DRC Government spokesperson has stated that FARDC officers are under judicial investigation.

The UN Joint Human Rights Office in the country has documented the killings of more than 280 individuals since July 2016 in the context of this violence.

Amid a worrying escalation of violence in provinces considered relatively calm, I call again on the Government to redouble its efforts to tackle impunity that feeds further violence and human rights violations, said Mr. Zeid.

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## **Attack in Somali capital a reminder of extremists' indifference towards human life – UN envoy**

19 February 2017 – Strongly condemning today's terrorist attack at a marketplace in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, which reportedly killed at least 25 people and injured dozens more, the United Nations envoy in the country stressed that incident is a brutal reminder of the retrograde tactics employed by violent extremists.

Killing civilians is despicable and achieves nothing except to remind Somalia of the indifference of extremists to human life and suffering," underscored Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and the head of the UN mission in the country (UNSOM), in a statement.

The perpetrators need to be brought to justice swiftly," he added.

Earlier today, at about 13:00 local time, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated at the Abagedo market near Kawa Guudey in the Dharkenley district of Mogadishu, claiming the lives of pedestrians and shopkeepers in the vicinity.

According to UNSOM, no group has yet claimed responsibility.

The attack comes at a time when Somalia is preparing for the inaugural celebrations of its newly elected Federal President, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo', who came to office earlier this month amid an extraordinary public outpouring of euphoria marking the beginning of a new chapter in Somali history that is ripe with opportunity and promise," noted the statement.

In the statement, Mr. Keating also praised the work of the country's security forces and first responders in the aftermath of the attack, and offered his condolences to the families and friends of those who were killed.

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## [UN, international organizations condemn attacks on civilians in parts of Central African Republic](#)

19 February 2017 – Voicing deep concern over the security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR), in particular in the Ouaka and Haute-Kotto prefectures, the United Nations together with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union (AU), the Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) and the European Union (EU) have commended the acts of violence that have exasperated an already alarming humanitarian situation.

According to a joint statement issued by the five organizations, violence perpetrated by the *Front populaire pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique* and its allies, as well as *Mouvement pour l'Unité et la Paix en Centrafrique* caused heavy civilian casualties as well as significant population displacement, adding to the humanitarian woes in the region.

Demanding that the belligerents cease the hostilities immediately, the organizations emphasized that "all attacks against the civilian

population, UN and humanitarian personnel may be subject to judicial prosecution, in line with the [national] legislation and international law.&#8221

They also expressed their deep appreciation for &#8220robust action&#8221 undertaken by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR, popularly known by its French acronym &#8211 MINUSCA &#8211 to protect civilians and help put an end to violence in the areas threatened by the belligerents and encouraged the mission to continue its efforts.

REALTED: Central African Republic: UN mission reinforces presence in restive Bambari

In the joint statement, the organizations also welcomed the measures put in place for the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court.

They also underlined that only dialogue, in strict adherence with the constitutional and democratic order, will allow the concerned Central African actors to find the appropriate and sustainable responses to their legitimate grievances.

&#8220In this regard, they reiterate the importance of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation led by the AU, ECCAS and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and supported by Angola, the Republic of Congo and Chad,&#8221 noted the joint statement.

In addition, expressing their commitment to work together for the success of the Initiative, in support of the efforts of President Faustin-Archange Touadéra aimed at sustainably promoting reconciliation and inclusive governance in line with the conclusions of the Bangui Forum, the five partner organizations underscored that those armed groups that engage in new violent acts run the risk of excluding themselves from the African Initiative and expose themselves to additional international sanctions.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country of 4.5 million people into civil conflict in 2013. Despite significant progress and successful elections, CAR has remained in the grip of instability and sporadic unrest.