

PRESS RELEASE

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As Colombia gets ready for elections, thousands suffer from ongoing violence

The candidates in Colombia's presidential election must make victims of the on-going violence their top priority, argues the Norwegian Refugee Council.

On 27 May, the first stage of the presidential election in Colombia will kick off.

"It should be a top priority and an obligation for the new President to put an end to the massive scale of suffering across Colombia and ensure that continued peace talks lead to concrete results," said Christian Visnes, country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Colombia.

Since the signing of a peace agreement between FARC-EP and the government in November 2016, more than 150,000 people have been displaced – the equivalent of one person every 4 minutes. In addition, Colombia is witnessing alarming levels of abuse by armed groups, including disappearances, sexual violence and child recruitments.

"Despite the peace agreement, people continue to be displaced from their homes, and lose their belongings, their land and livelihoods. Many have lost close family members, friends and neighbours to the continued violence. How much longer must we wait before we see an end to this conflict?" asked Christian Visnes.

"I was displaced, but I don't want to go back because there is a lot of violence and I don't want to expose my children to the dangers," a newly displaced mother of two told NRC. She is one of the 10,300 people very recently displaced in Catatumbo, a region located north-east of Colombia.

Over 7,3 million people are internally displaced in Colombia today. Already a vulnerable group, many displaced become victims of deliberate attacks, threats, forced recruitments and killings perpetrated by the around seven armed groups who continue to openly challenge international humanitarian law.

Note to editors

- NRC Country Director – Christian Visnes - available for interview in English, Spanish and Norwegian. Tel: 3214957209
- The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an aid organisation working in 31 countries. Read more [here](#).
- Photos: <https://nrc.smugmug.com/Country-Programmes/Colombia/2018/Press-release-Colombia/n-jpMMLC>

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