

Press Release 65/2024 English

INTER-AMERICAN COURT VISITED COLOMBIA TO MONITOR COMPLIANCE WITH JUDGMENTS



San José, Costa Rica, September 30, 2024. – A delegation from the Inter-American Court and the Registrar’s Office conducted a visit to Bogotá, Colombia, from September 23 to 26, 2024, to hold private hearings on monitoring compliance with judgments in five cases, a roundtable on compliance with the measure to search for the whereabouts and/or identify the remains of disappeared persons. Meetings were held with several State authorities, as well as an activity to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the installation of the I/A Court HR. The delegation of the Court was led by Judge Ricardo C. Pérez Manrique, accompanied by Ana Lucía Aguirre, Director a.i. of the Unit of Monitoring Compliance with Judgment of the Registrar’s Office, and Ana Lucía Ugalde, an attorney from that Unit.

The I/A Court HR would like to thank Colombia for its acceptance and collaboration to hold these activities of monitoring compliance with judgment in its territory. Specifically, it would like to recognize the Department of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its efforts in organizing the necessary aspects to carry out the activities. In addition, it would like to thank the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) and the Search Unit for Missing Persons (UBPD) for their collaboration to hold the monitoring activities at their facilities.

I. Hearings on Monitoring Compliance with Judgment

From September 23 to 25, 2024, private hearings on monitoring compliance with judgment were held in five cases regarding Colombia. These took place at the seat of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

To summon these hearings, the Presidency of the Court considered the requests made by the parties in several cases regarding Colombia that are in the monitoring compliance with judgment stage.

The Court has highlighted the importance of States allowing this type of procedure in their territory, since this modality of hearings and monitoring activities enable greater participation by the victims and the various State officials and authorities directly in charge of implementing and executing the reparations ordered in the judgment, and they create an opportunity to establish direct dialogue between the parties and more willingness to assume commitments aimed at a prompt compliance with the reparations.



1. Hearing in the Case of Rodríguez Vera et al. (The Disappeared from the Palace of Justice)

In the judgment, issued in 2014, the State was found responsible for several human rights violations committed in the context of the events known as “the taking” and “the re-taking” of the Palace of Justice, in Bogotá, which took place on November 6 and 7, 1985.

The hearing of September 23, 2024, was held in order to receive updated and detailed information from the State regarding compliance with six reparations related to: i) the investigation, prosecution and, where applicable, punishment of those responsible for the forced disappearance of ten victims; the forced disappearance and subsequent extrajudicial killing of one victim, as well as the detention and torture or cruel and degrading treatment suffered by four victims; ii) the investigation to determine and elucidate the facts relating to two victims; iii) the search to establish the whereabouts and/or identify the remains of the five victims who are still disappeared; iv) provide medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment to the victims who request it; v) publish the official summary of the judgment in a television program of ample national coverage; and vi) to make an audiovisual documentary of the facts of the case, the victims and the search for justice of their next of kin. The hearing also sought to receive the observations of the victims and their representatives and the opinion of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The victims’ representatives at the hearing were the “José Alvear Restrepo” Lawyers Collective, the Center for Justice and International Law, the Inter-Ecclesiastical Commission for Justice and Peace of Colombia. An attorney who is an Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission also participated. On behalf of the State, the participants were authorities and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Search Unit for Missing Persons, the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.



2. Hearing in the Case of Yarce et al.

In the judgment, issued in 2016, the State was found internationally responsible for several human rights violations committed to the detriment of human rights defenders Ana Teresa Yarce, María del Socorro Mosquera Londoño, Mery del Socorro Naranjo Jiménez, Luz Dary Ospina Bastidas and Miryam Eugenia Rúa Figueroa and their next of kin, which took place between 2002 and 2004 in “Commune 13” in Medellín.

The hearing of September 24, 2024, was held in order to receive updated and detailed information on compliance with four reparations related to: i) the investigation, prosecution and, where applicable, punishment of those responsible for the forced disappearance of Myriam Eugenia Rúa Figueroa and her next of kin; ii) to provide medical and psychological treatment to the victims who request it; iii) to perform an act of public acknowledgment of international responsibility for the facts of the case; and iv) to implement a program, course or workshop through the corresponding State entities in Commune 13 aimed at promoting and explaining the work of human rights defenders. The observations of the victims and their representatives and the opinion of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were also received at the hearing.

The Interdisciplinary Group on Human Rights also participated in the hearing as the victims’ representative. An attorney who is an Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission also participated. On behalf of the State, the participants were authorities and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General’s Office, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

3. Hearing in the Case of Villamizar Durán et al.

In the judgment, issued in 2018, the State was declared responsible for the violation of the right to life of Gustavo Giraldo Villamizar Duran, Elio Gelves Carrillo, Carlos Arturo Uva Velandia, Wilfredo Quiñónez Bárcenas, José Gregorio Romero Reyes and Albeiro Ramírez Jorge, who were killed by members of the Armed Forces in Colombia in the departments of Arauca, Santander and Casanare between 1992 and 1997. Except for the last victim, the facts of this case follow a modus operandi characterized by the death of civilians who were subsequently presented as members of illegal armed groups killed in combat.

The hearing of September 24, 2024, was held in order to receive updated and detailed information from the State regarding compliance with three reparations related to: i) continuing the investigations and judicial proceedings in progress aimed at determining the facts and corresponding liabilities; ii) to hold a public act of acknowledgment of international responsibility for the facts of the case, and iii) to provide psychological and/or psychiatric treatment of the victims who request it. The observations of the victims’ representatives and the opinion of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were also received at the hearing.

The victims’ representatives at the hearing were the “José Alvear Restrepo” Lawyers Collective and Humanidad Vigente Legal Corporation. An attorney who is an Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission also participated.



On behalf of the State, the participants were authorities and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General's Office, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

4. *Hearing in the Case of Manuel Cepeda Vargas*

The judgment issued in 2010 declared the international responsibility of the State for the extrajudicial killing of Senator Manuel Cepeda Vargas on August 9, 1994. This case occurred in a context of systematic violence against members of the Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union) political party.

The hearing of September 25, 2025, was held in order to receive updated and detailed information from the State regarding compliance with three reparations concerning: i) the investigation, prosecution, and where applicable, punishment of those responsible for the extrajudicial killing of Senator Manuel Cepeda Vargas; ii) the adoption of measures to guarantee the safety of the next of kin of Senator Manuel Cepeda Vargas, and to prevent them having to move or to leave the country again as a result of threats, acts of harassment or persecution; and iii) to prepare a publication and make an audiovisual documentary of the political life, journalism career and political role of Senator Manuel Cepeda Vargas, in coordination with his next of kin and to disseminate them. The observations of the victims and their representatives and the opinion of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were also received at the hearing.

The victims' representatives at the hearing were the "José Alvear Restrepo" Lawyers Collective and the Center for Justice and International Law. An attorney who is an Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission also participated. On behalf of the State, the participants were authorities and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Attorney General's Office, the Presidential Advisor for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law and the National Protection Unit.

5. *Hearing in the Case of the Pueblo Bello Massacre*

The judgment, issued in 2006, declared the State internationally responsible for several human rights violations to the detriment of 37 victims of forced disappearance and six victims of extrajudicial killings, committed in the village Pueblo Bello, Antioquia Department, by approximately 60 members of paramilitary groups on January 14 and 15, 1990.

The hearing of September 25, 2024, was held in order to receive updated and detailed information from the State regarding compliance with four reparations: i) the investigation to determine the responsibility of those who participated in the massacre, as well as those responsible, either due to action or omission, for non-compliance with the State's obligation to guarantee the violated rights; ii) the search for and identification of the disappeared persons and the delivery of the mortal remains to their next of kin; iii) to guarantee the safety conditions for the next of kin of the disappeared persons and victims of the killings, as well as other former inhabitants of Pueblo Bello, who were displaced, to be able to return to that location, if they wish to do so, and iv) to create a monument that is adequate to remember the events of the Pueblo Bello massacre. The observations of the victims and their representatives and the opinion of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were also received at the hearing.



The victims' representatives at the hearing were the Colombian Commission of Jurists and the Center for Justice and International Law. An attorney who is an Advisor to the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission also participated. On behalf of the State, the participants were authorities and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Attorney General's Office, the Search Unit for Missing Persons, the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Culture.

II. Roundtable on compliance with the measure to search for the whereabouts and/or identify the remains of disappeared persons



On September 23, the roundtable "*Compliance with the measure to search for the whereabouts and/or identify the remains of disappeared persons, ordered in the judgments in 12 cases regarding Colombia*" was held. It took place at the seat of the Search Unit for Missing Persons and was jointly organized by the I/A Court HR and that Unit, and the Department of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia.

On behalf of the I/A Court HR, the participants were Judge Ricardo C. Pérez Manrique, the Director a.i. of the Unit of Monitoring Compliance with Judgment, an attorney from that Unit and two scholarship recipients of the Registrar's Office. Other attendees included the representatives of the victims in the 12 cases in the monitoring of compliance with judgment stage before the I/A Court HR in which this reparation measure was ordered, as well as representatives of State entities with jurisdiction on the matter of the search for disappeared persons, such as the Search Unit for Missing Persons, the Attorney General's Office, the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences of Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Ministry of Justice and Law. The Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Costa Rica, the Director of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Ministry of Foreign affairs and officials from that department also participated in the event.

This space represented an opportunity for these participants to reflect on the need for an inter-institutional approach in specific search plans in these cases, to discuss the need for greater collaboration between the various institutions that have jurisdiction in this matter and the challenges in the implementation and compliance with the measure to search for the whereabouts and/or identify the remains, especially the need to establish strategies to communicate with the victims, their next of kin and their representatives.



III. Celebration of the 45th Anniversary of the Installation of the I/A Court HR



The I/A Court HR and Universidad del Externado of Colombia held an event to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the installation of the Inter-American Court.

The opening remarks were given by Hernando Parra Nieto, Rector of Universidad Externado; Emilssen González de Cancino, Dean of the Faculty of Law of that university; Judge Ricardo C. Pérez Manrique; and Juliana Bustamante Reyes, Director of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The event consisted of two panel discussions which analyzed the importance and the impact of this international Court throughout its 45 years of existence.

- The first panel discussion was "*Experiences of Former Presidents and Former Judges of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights,*" in which former Colombian Judge Carlos Vicente de Roux (1998-2003), and two current judges of the I/A Court HR, Judge Humberto Sierra Porto, of Colombian nationality, who was President from 2014-2015 and concluded his 12 years of mandates in 2024, and Judge Ricardo C. Pérez Manrique, who presided the Court from 2022-2023, participated.
- The second panel discussion "*Dialogue between international and national law: contributions of the I/A Court HR to the protection of human rights in Colombia,*" consisted of Judge Jorge Enrique Ibáñez Najar, Vice President of the Constitutional Court; Óscar Parra Vera, Judge of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace; Paula Robledo Silva, Legal Secretary of the Presidency; Ana María Rodríguez, Director of the Colombian Commission of Jurists and Marcela Sánchez, Executive Director of the organization Colombia Diversa.

You can read the activity's program [here](#) and see the livestream [here](#).

IV. Activities and Protocol or Work Meetings



From September 23 to 25, 2024, Judge Ricardo C. Pérez Manrique held several protocol meetings.

- On Monday, September 23, he met with Roberto Carlos Vidal López and Harvey Danilo Suárez Morales, President and Executive Secretary of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, respectively, at the facilities of that entity.
- On that same day he met with Luz Janeth Forero Martínez, Director of the Search Unit for Missing Persons, and Andrés García Ospina, Head of the Legal Advisory Office of that Unit, at the facilities of that State entity.
- On Tuesday, September 24, he was received at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Paula Andrea Vásquez Restrepo, General Secretary in charge of the functions of the Minister's Office. Also present at the meeting were Carlos Rodríguez Mejía, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Costa Rica; Juliana Bustamante Reyes, Human Rights Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and María Carolina Beltrán, Coordinator of the Group to Follow-up on the Orders and Recommendations of International Bodies on Human Rights Matters of that Ministry.
- On Wednesday, September 25, there was a meeting with César Palomino Cortés, Director of the National Agency for Legal Defense of the State. Members of that agency with functions related to the implementation of two judgments issued by the I/A Court HR were also present at the meeting.
- Another meeting was held that day with Ana Teresa Bernal, Alejandro Valencia and Rubén Pinilla, members of the Commission to confirm the identity and/or kinship of the victims in the *Case of Members and Militants of the Patriotic Union v. Colombia*, which was created and put into functioning as per the judgment in that case.

On Thursday, September 26, the Director a.i. and an attorney of the Unit of Monitoring Compliance with Judgment of the I/A Court HR held work meetings with officials of the Group for Assistance and Reparation to Victims of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, and with GIT- Group to Follow-up on the Orders and Recommendations on Human Rights Matters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



In the afternoon, on that same day, they participated in an activity held at the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, in which they spoke about compliance with the judgments of the I/A Court HR and the information provided in that regard by the SJP.

The Inter American Court of Human Rights would like to thank the support of the European Commission, which made this visit possible through the project "Improvement of the capacities of the Inter American Court of Human Rights, phase II."



This press release was drafted by the Registrar's Office of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; it is solely responsible for this document.

For more information on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, please visit www.corteidh.or.cr or write to the Registrar, Pablo Saavedra Alessandri, at corteidh@corteidh.or.cr. To contact the press office please write to Dannel Pinilla, Director of Communications and Press, at prensa@corteidh.or.cr.

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