

## **Interview with comandante Isabela of the FARC-EP**

It is a sunny afternoon somewhere in the Yari plains, and I am there only with the idea of meeting with *commandante* Isabela San Roque to discuss all possible issues.

Why Isabela? Because of her participation in the negotiations in Havana as part of the guerrilla's Peace Delegation in the Subcommittee on Gender. I wanted to know the perspective of a person who has worked on Cuban soil and is today in the Colombian jungles pursuing the same tasks of peace. *"I am a convinced guerrilla, optimistic about the peace process for Colombia"*. This is how our conversation begun.

**In Colombia the FARC has had several negotiations, what is the difference between the previous and those developed today in Havana?**

Well, greetings to the newspaper Voz. I must say that, in all processes of negotiations with the government, we have been willing to reach a negotiated political solution to this serious conflict, and we sat with the State to clarify some points of agreement. In all attempts at negotiation, that has been our characteristic. But history has shown that different governments have had a position of disloyalty to their people and this is why the response has been a military solution. At this stage the FARC-EP has managed to reach the people, persuade them of the true causes of the conflict. For this the Colombian society accompanies us in the great task of making peace, and that support has allowed the progress made, despite a few who oppose it.

**The usual suspects?**

Yes, those cowering characters who are not resigned to losing the business of war and that is why they behave for what they are: warmongers. The support of different sectors of society makes these characters losing political space. That's another difference with previous peace processes.

**The subcommission**



**When talks began, the issue of gender was not addressed, why did you decide to put it on the table?**

We are proud to have done it. And even more to have been able to create the subcommittee. It is also the first negotiation of a conflict, where the word for women of all strata, social and organizational conditions has reached the subcommittee, since the rights of women in the abstract do not exist. Women influence all items on the agenda: the exaggerated inequality in land tenure, there are rural women without property, women are restricted political participation, we only have the possibility of being represented for public office in a 30% of places, there is nothing more odious than that quota; women are also used in the phenomenon of drug trafficking. The victims of the conflict are mostly women, girls, but also because in our organization there are many women. Women are more than half of the population, we are the democratic reserve of the country, guarantors for a successful result of the talks and peace building.

**What are the strengths in this subcommittee?**

All points of the Agenda, for each has its particularity. Look, for example: in the political point of Comprehensive Agrarian Development the role of women as victims of displacement is prioritized along with their children, but the ownership and return of the dispossessed lands also arises; against the dispossession both cultural and social differential approaches were

applied, -afrodescendants, indigenous, widows, displaced, single mothers, all this we applied. On the issue of drug trafficking, women are used as the so-called “mules”, this is the worst phenomenon of using women’s bodies. Indeed it does not solve women’s problems, because they end up in jail while drug traffickers remain at large. The agreements clearly address how to solve these realities.

### **Women in the center**

#### **What is your opinion on the issue of victims, in what refers to women?**

This point is of paramount importance, since through the Commission of Truth and Restorative Justice, you can conclude that all women are victims, because this conflict has deep patriarchal roots. The most affected victims, in my view, were those who experienced the phenomenon of paramilitarism and the army. Both executed irreparable actions on the lives of women, such as false positives, raping of girls in military bases as Tolemaida by American soldiers in absolute impunity. Thanks to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, there is the possibility to discover the truth, and certainly reparation. But most importantly is that these horrors shall never be repeated and that women shall no longer be silenced.

### **Truth is the key...**

The repugnant acts against women should be established in the Truth Commission and the true perpetrators must be made accountable to the jurisdiction and given the corresponding sanctions.

#### **Some women’s organizations speak of crimes within your ranks: what do you think of these comments?**

This is part of the discredited status of the media; they reinforce it with soap operas to make our revolutionary forces appear as macabre elements. They build a matrix of opinion to ignore part of the struggle of women: deciding over her body, decriminalization of abortion.



### **Inclusive language**

#### **What in the agreements is new for the guerrilla?**

Undoubtedly for the guerrilla new were the topics worked on by the Gender Subcommittee, especially the use of inclusive language, explicit recognition of the existence of women of the FARC (farianas) and in the 5 points of the Agenda, women of the delegation put their stamp as plenipotentiaries. The fact that we are not at all times on tv, does not mean that we do not discuss about gender together with our male comrades. One thing to note is that the government representative agreed with us in that women, without social distinction, have been victims of a macho culture. Of course the women of the FARC–EP have more advanced proposals, but there was consensus that gender could not be left out of the agenda.

#### **After the Agreements, what are your plans for the future?**

As a guerrilla woman, my personal project is towards achieving peace with social justice, to lead a decent life with my people and my family, especially next to my mother, who is the one who has taught me to be a real fighter.

<http://www.thedawn-news.org/2016/05/31/interview-with-comandante-isabela-of-the-farc-ep/>