

## **TESTIMONY BY “CARLOS ALBERTO PLOTIER”, FORMER MEMBER OF THE FARC GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION**

When I was a member of FARC, with the Bloque José María Córdoba, I went under the name “Carlos Alberto Plotier”.

I am in the middle of a rehabilitation process, making every effort to return to society, because of several reasons:

In the first place, because FARC has been undergoing a process in which the military conception is paramount and the political perspective has been abandoned. The gap between theory and praxis is wider everyday and the hard liners within FARC have imposed their view in the handling of armed confrontation, which privileges violence above all other elements. The original revolutionary conception, according to which it is for the population to seek and move forward the necessary changes to achieve a better society is all but forgotten.

At the present time, not only in Colombia but in Latin America, the general trend is towards finding concerted ways to promote new societies. Latin America is living a political time in which the only way to achieve desired changes is through civilized confrontation through democratic institutions. The armed struggle is just not any more the right way.

The process of demobilization is necessary because the nation is in need of its men. Rehabilitation and reinsertion to civil life represent the proper way ahead in order to build the Colombia we all want, a Colombia in which everybody fits.

I surrendered myself to the constitutional forces, in particular to the National Police, which I think is that institution entrusted with the task of protecting the rights of the citizens and one that over these 10 years I have been confronting Government forces has shown seriousness and commitment. I chose the

municipality of San Luis because it offers good conditions to those members of FARC and ELN who are willing to surrender their weapons.

In the second place, I quit FARC because of my family. Family values and traditions are crucial for every Colombian and revolutionary life within FARC leaves no place whatsoever for that, given that everything is absorbed by the armed confrontation. Family ties are in the essence of any human being and this is a very strong element that may encourage combatants to return to civil life.

In the third place, I was simply tired with this war in which brother is killing brother. It has become a fratricide confrontation in which members of the same family are often fighting for and against the State. It is a protracted conflict that has produced three generations of people suffering and dying and at this pace it will never be able to generate a true popular revolution. At the current levels of violence, the time will come when there is simply nobody to fight with. The more you are in the mountains the more you deteriorate yourself physically, morally and spiritually.

I am a first hand witness that the Government and the Police is willing to provide the necessary guarantees and safeguards for those who want to surrender their weapons and engage in a confrontation of ideas, within the framework of the rule of law.

I call upon every combatant, every layman fighter, every commander, every person who dreams with building a new country, to enter into an analysis of the realities of revolutionary life, and I am sure he will come to the conclusion that the way of the arms is the wrong one.

It is the war of ideas we should pursue. Ideas are an engine for development and a thriving force for change. Machine guns only leave blood-soaked lands.

I echo what a FARC leader and ideologist, Jacobo Arenas, used to say : “The fate of the nation cannot be that of war”. I Therefore extend an invitation to all

combatants to abandon this conflict and pursue change by pacific means, so we can build a better, kinder and more just country in which the Colombian people can live in peace.

For over ten years I was a witness and actor in the confrontation. I was in charge of political and military actions and in that capacity I gave everything I am and everything I have. And at the end of this period I realized I had not achieved anything different from increased pain and hatred. What I did was to distance myself of political processes that I once had considered as important pieces of the development of Colombia. Ten years of conflict that in the end provided nothing at all; ten years of struggle, of history past, wasted and forgotten with the cruelest of legacies: the legacy of pain.

The motivations that at a given moment I considered valid to warrant revolutionary armed struggle were devoid of purpose. The daily life of revolutionary fighting brought about only the displacement of innocent people, the bleeding of communities and huge losses in the nation's economic, social and political system.

It is not enough to repent and ask for forgiveness, Everybody has to take a stand and come up with actions relevant for building a lasting peace with social justice within a democratic framework. In today's interdependent world, more than ever, there is general agreement on the need to pursue peaceful solutions for lasting conflicts. War has never been a solution and it only exacerbates problems and increase hatred. What is needed then is that all combatants and members of revolutionary groups put into practice their revolutionary ideology: the revolution is made with ideas, not with arms.

I extend an invitation to all members of armed groups active in Colombia to abandon the armed struggle and enter into a rehabilitation scheme. To all those who shared with me the hard life inside FARC, who lived through the pain and anguish, I call to submit to the rehabilitation and demobilization processes offered by President Alvaro Uribe as part of his open arms policies. This is the road to harmony and peace and it is a road open for everyone.