

Management of a ceasefire amidst negotiations Lessons for the Colombian case

According to a study undertaken by the director of the School for a Culture of Peace (SCP) of Barcelona Autonomous University (UAB in Spanish), which is now available on the School's web page (www.escolapau.org) and which looks into 27 negotiation cases including offers or agreements on a ceasefire, **in none of the cases has the ceasefire taken place with previous troop concentration and cantonment of the armed groups, or previous handing over of arms to initiate the negotiation.** The study indicates that cantonment only takes place when negotiations have been completed and after a peace agreement has been signed, which in turn, allows for the initiation of a DDR process (demobilization, disarmament and reintegration). **In none of the case studies, has the ceasefire or end of hostilities had as compensation the release of kidnapped people as this type of action is only used in Colombia,** on a massive scale, which is why it has not been necessary to take stock of this issue during the negotiation.

The cases under analysis correspond to eleven African processes (Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Sudan – South, East and Darfur -, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Uganda, Western Sahara and Angola-Cabinda), eleven from Asia (India – Andhra Pradesh, Assam y Nagalandia -, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar), two from Europe (Spain and Northern Ireland) and three from the Middle East (Turkish Kurdistan, Yemen and Lebanon). Colombia and Palestine have been excluded due to the fact that these reflections are based upon the former and to the existence of a large number of groups with rather volatile commitments in the latter.

The study also concludes that in 60% of the cases, **ceasefire declarations have been repeatedly infringed. Mechanisms for monitoring ceasefires have been created in only half of these instances,** usually as a result of a final peace agreement although in some very few cases, such mechanisms have been created in the intermediate stage of a negotiation. **The United Nations has participated in 25% of the cases** and had responsibility for the monitoring of a ceasefire or an end of hostilities, whilst other international bodies (EU, AU, ASEAN) or individual countries, such as Northern Europe or members of the Organization of the Islamic Community, have participated in three cases. Only on one particular occasion (Israel-Lebanon) has the UN Security Council imposed a ceasefire. In very few cases (Uganda, for example) have there been unilateral declarations of a ceasefire on the part of the government in question. However, there have been instances when an armed group (such as the PKK, for example) has called a unilateral ceasefire which the Government has never responded to. There are also examples of a ceasefire declaration which has not necessarily involved a formal negotiation (India-Assam) and negotiations without a ceasefire (Northern Ireland or Indonesia-Aceh). **Bilateral ceasefire and simultaneous start of negotiations has sometimes occurred** (Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines/NPA). There have also been instances where a government has agreed to considering the actual location of an armed group who is willing to negotiate a *temporary sanctuary* until conditions favour the group's move to cantonment zones.

Darfur, India-Assam and Indonesia-Aceh have all created **humanitarian corridors during a temporary truce** in order to assist the population affected by the conflict or by a natural disaster.

As a conclusion, the author recommends that the **negotiations to be resumed in August between the Colombian Government and the ELN** should be based on the regular criteria used in other peace processes undertaken worldwide. This would imply the withdrawal of two issues which may block negotiations: the release of people detained and the demand that troops be concentrated which, if carried out simultaneously, would mean the **immediate release of everyone detained by the ELN and the clause that the Government would not demand the concentration of ELN troops in a given territory.** This simultaneous agreement would allow for lessons to be learned from other processes where a large number of options has been used to verify the ceasefire and the end of hostilities without troops concentration. It would also allow to unknot the existing situation and encourage the negotiation to have a more political and social content.