

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

La Tizza / Rebellion

11.09.2023

Interview with Antonio Garcia, First Commander of the ELN

**"Peace is not an agreement on paper, but a process of creating new circumstances"**



**Sources:** The Tizza

With the presence of Beltrán, chief negotiator of the ELN, and Gustavo Petro, President of Colombia, the National Participation Committee (CNP) was installed, with 81 delegates belonging to 30 social sectors. As part of the formal beginning of a "bilateral ceasefire" agreed for 6 months, in the round of talks held in Cuba.

"Count on us to solve causes, and not consequences," were the words of Pablo Beltrán, making it clear that armed violence is very small compared to the systematic violence of the State that starves, kills and extinguishes the people.

*María Consuelo Tapia, member of the negotiating team, left very precise political definitions, demanding "facts of peace", which allow the most neglected sectors of the people to give voice to historical demands, ancestral and very current exclusions, in the search "for a dialogue society" to solve their historical structural problems. In his speech, Gustavo Petro expressed the position he represents as part of the Colombian State. There are two central elements in his words that are repeated: the need to put an end to the forms of historical violence in the exercise of politics, and that the results of this process of dialogues for peace be the fruit of a great political-national agreement.*

*Pablo Beltran, for his part, pointed out the dangers that threaten peace, since the government is a portion of the State, and there are sectors of the elites that do not accept the current process of talks, and we will have to observe their behavior over time. At the same time, he emphasized the participation of society in the construction of proposals for social transformation for Peace. And that these do not remain as declarations, but that their implementation is guaranteed as a result of a great political agreement of different sectors at the national level.*

*The government is thinking of a great national political agreement that resolves the violence. The ELN considers the construction of this agreement as a way to initiate real social, economic and political transformations, with the people as the protagonist.*

*The ceasefire should allow us to advance as much as possible on three fundamental points to move towards an agreement. The first is related to the participation of society, aimed at building the methodologies of this exercise of participation that begins. The second point is that of democracy for peace, which is aimed at making a diagnosis of the structural problems of Colombian society. And the third is to define the transformations for peace, which derive from the previous diagnosis. The table established is to promote, with all the possible force of this historical moment, the real transformations and changes of society.*

*At this juncture, La Tizza interviews Antonio Garcia, First Commander of the ELN.*

**LT: As we know, paramilitarism has always had a specific function within the type of state domination that has historically been established in Colombia. How do you prepare to assume the political and military risks of the peace process in terms of the presence of paramilitary groups that carry out actions that they then blame on the Army or the ELN itself?**

**AG:** The threat of paramilitarism is not only in times of ceasefire, but permanent. Paramilitarism is known to be a component essential of the counterinsurgency doctrine of the Colombian State, that is why It survives governments. Paramilitarism, more than a

structure, is a modality to carry out the covert operations of the State. Performed everything that the State should do, but that would put its legitimacy and would bring serious national legal difficulties and International.

Know that the paramilitaries have a license to use the business of drug trafficking to autonomously finance their structures and operations. They are responsible for carrying out targeted assassinations against leaders social and community massacres, massacres to instill terror in communities and make them desist from their struggles. They also act as a force of Clash of transnational corporations interested in displacing the communities of the territories where they need to promote the exploitation of resources.

In the present and during the course of the ceasefire are an apparatus functional to military forces to conduct offensive operations in territories of guerrilla presence and mobility. With the purpose to affect communities and continue with their policy of dispossession, and constrain the spaces of permanence and mobility of the guerrillas. That it would be favorable to the State from the strategic point of view.

Are functional to the State, thanks to them it does not assume responsibilities and It lets them act militarily against us. For these reasons, the ELN is free to act against them, with these groups and gangs not The Ceasefire governs.

**LT: In terms of possible progress on other issues on the agenda in the peace talks—for example, political participation, agrarian reform, etc.—what issues are under discussion right now ahead of the next round of talks in Venezuela?**

**AG:** The first three points of the Agenda and which refer to Participation of Society, Democracy for Peace and Transformations for peace, will be carried out in the course of the Participation. A diagnosis of the major problems will be established existing in the country in the economic, social, political, cultural and especially the treatment of conflicts in society as part of the management of the State. In the use of force and weapons that Final ends up being the generator and reproducer of the armed conflict. After this diagnosis, an Agenda for Change or transformations, both aspects will be built on the basis of an Agreement National, to make Colombia change for the good of all.

In the fourth cycle to be held in Venezuela will evaluate the agreements that have not been fulfilled and remain essential for continuity of the process and will also continue to advance in the construction of the Design of the Participation of the Society. Difficulties will be reviewed and will examine how work with the National Committee is progressing of Participation to harmonize projections.

**LT: Up to now, a Special Justice for Peace format has been implemented, which had declared purposes and then had a particular modality of implementation, not always according to what was designed. What criticisms could be made of your implementation process?**

**AG:** We have always said that this agreement was not established with the ELN, because so much, it has nothing to do with us. The structure of the agreements The construction period between the government and the ELN is different, and we talked about it. with the Santos government when they wanted it to be accepted by the ELN. We told them quite clearly that what was not discussed in the Bureau of the ELN, we did not accept it. We assume that in the negotiations With the ELN, a political agreement regarding the solution of the armed conflict. And the ELN's future legal status is also a Political agreement and as such is written in one of the points of the Agenda. For the ELN, the Special Justice for Peace is part of the The institutionality of the State and therefore we do not accept it.

**LT: If we take into account that there are differences in what we could call the management of Petro, contradictions between the different sectors of the government coalition, and disputes with other sectors – some very reactionary and conservative – of traditional Colombian politics. How does the ELN assess the resistance of sectors of the Colombian State to the process of talks?**

**AG:** We could simplify for the sake of achieving a better understanding of the phenomenon Colombian politician. At present in the Parliament there are 3 Political coalitions: far right, centre-right and center-left, none of them can legislate as a force It requires alliances with the other coalitions.

Every One of these coalitions seeks to become in the short and medium term in the force that can lead the next government. That's why they move with care and some flexibility that allows them to have alliances. Government seeks parliamentary majorities in centre-right bloc where there is the Liberal Party and the Santistas, and also the Greens. Those of the extreme right are grouped in the Democratic Center, Change Radical and the Conservatives. And they seek alliances with the sectors of the center-right. Center-right coalition seeks alliances in both Sides.

The government, at times, prioritizes the alliance with sectors of traditional politics and leaves aside the social and popular field. But when these alliances do not work, he turns to mobilization and popular support.

The criticisms made of the government due to this type of reformist positions are seen by the sectors of the Historical Pact as if those who criticize from the popular camp or the left

were Uribistas. If you want to build alliances from the left, government sectors must be open to criticism and for that you need to listen to society, not just those who speak well of the government.

**LT: In the post-conflict scenario with the FARC-EP, we have seen the continuity of a policy of physical elimination of demobilized combatants and social leaders. What analysis could you offer of what that post-conflict scenario has been like to this day? What would be the ELN's main demands for a hypothetical post-conflict period?**

**AG:** We have always been critical of the concept of "post-conflict": it cannot There is no society without conflicts, for they are the dynamic in a society. Through them the states of domination is broken, exploitation and submission. It is through a correct treatment of the conflicts that are achieved other forms of constructive relationships in the within societies. It is not about deleting or ignoring the conflicts, but to know how to treat or manage them. You always have to do it with the participation of society.

With the demobilization of the Ex-FARC, the conflict remained intact. Even part of its structures today play on the side of the same enemy, which means that there was a recycling promoted by the same State. The State and the political regime did not change at all, its essence continues, it is a militarized police regime that seeks to maintain the hegemony of powerful economic and political sectors through political persecution.

Que llega hasta el asesinato de la oposición. Hemos tratado de explorar en el proceso que se abre con el ELN, si se puede transitar a una democratización del Estado y del régimen político sobre la base de un Acuerdo Nacional que haga de Colombia un país democrático, justo e incluyente.

Un proceso de negociaciones con el Estado no se basa en hacer reclamos, sino en establecer acuerdos, en eso estamos. Nuestro propósito es que lo que se llegue a pactar sea con la participación de la sociedad.

**LT: ¿En el contexto actual existen riesgos de fracturas internas —como las ocurridas con las FARC-EP y la Segunda Marquetalia— que pongan en peligro el proceso mismo y luego el posconflicto? ¿Qué características del ELN como organización político-militar les podría permitir enfrentar de una mejor manera tales riesgos?**

**AG:** Wrong analyses have been made, because it was said that it was More favorable to negotiate with a vertical and hierarchical organization such as they were the Ex-FARC, that's a lie. For some things it can serve, But for a political negotiation it is a great weakness, because it was a organization little given to discuss politics within its forces. Even in the military, also at the strategic level is a great Failure that a force can not control

its command. It was seen in the War of Independence when Francisco Miranda negotiated backs of their officers. Which proved disastrous for both the cause libertarian as for the life of Miranda himself.

The ELN is cohesive in all its structures and has a mandate to advance in a negotiation to a point and when that point is reached it will be evaluated. For peace is not an agreement on paper, but the process of creating new circumstances in concrete reality that make possible the transition of the country. In that direction we have been advancing, that point of evaluation has not yet arrived.

No We have dissents or internal fractures or differences over what is is doing in the Bureau. The Organization is calm, if they turn out differences or critical points of view in the militancy or in some structure, will be heard, analysed and taken into account in the dialogue process. That's what a functioning organization is all about respecting internal democracy. In the ELN, discipline operates on the basis of political identity, not according to submission or Uncritical silence.

**LT: July 28 commemorated the birth of a revolutionary leader of exceptional conditions: Hugo Chavez. On some occasions he said, with sharp irony, that the Venezuelan oligarchy had to thank them that their political project had won democratically, at the polls, because the Venezuelan people in their accumulation of struggles were going to solve the problems by much more violent means. There he puts us in front of an unquestionable reality: democratic electoral processes allow certain advances to the revolutionary project, but they can also drain social conflict, without working for deep, radical solutions. How does the ELN evaluate the management of the Petro government? Are there possibilities to advance in deeper reforms where the Colombian people and society become the protagonists?**

**AG:** As I pointed out before, the Petro Government balances between the alliance with the traditional political parties and when this does not work for it, it turns to seek popular support and the social movement. The ideal would be to identify more with popular aspirations and from there push for deeper reforms.

All process of change, of transformations, either by democratic means or radical, with mass uprisings or armed struggle itself, or In order to be true, they must have the support of identity, with the aspirations and strength of the popular movement.

**LT: August 13 is a very special day for Cuban revolutionary militancy, and also for the struggles of our peoples, for the excluded, anonymous and hungry sectors of our societies. It is the birth of Fidel, it could be another date, but his extensive record of**

**services to the Revolution and popular causes point to it as a day to reflect on paths and alternatives, on risks and successes. What dimensions or orientations of your revolutionary practice could serve us today in Our America, in the current struggles?**

**AG:** Fidel is the synthesis of the struggles of Cuba and the Continent in a Moment in history when the possibilities of the roads democratic were shut down. He himself tried it in its beginnings and was the basis for building the Cuban national identity, which by trying to be Denied saw the need to give it a revolutionary dimension Deep. It was not possible to advance national independence without it gave a social content to Cuba's changes. That at that time It must have been of anti-capitalist content and meant placing everything that existed in Cuba according to the social and national interest, a junction who ended up defining himself as a socialist.

The reason for the existence of a free and independent Cuba became a world flag against U.S. imperialism. Each scenario was fought and won with reasons and political coherence that have given it the legitimacy of existing within walking distance of the most powerful empire in history. Teaching us in practice that we can only have what we are capable of defending. History not only absolved Fidel, but Fidel made it triumphant for the Cuban people and opened a path that remains unfinished for all of Latin America.

**LT:** As you know, Cuba is included in that infamous list of alleged "countries sponsoring terrorism." A concept that also suffers from hypocritical ambiguity. For them that the people take up arms to conquer their rights, or just to preserve life, is already terrorism. The dominant sectors of US politics, too, have no limits in offering proof of their infinite and historical perversion. During the Covid-19 pandemic they were cruel against this people, they intensified their policy of sanctions, destruction of the economy and the possibilities of finding a socialist and sovereign alternative to navigate the current crisis. And at the same time, revolutionaries learned with Fidel to walk with a magnifying glass in their pockets to look at their own mistakes: a Revolution is obliged to be very demanding with itself. All of that is part of the current complexity of our struggle. How does the ELN assess the example of resistance of the Cuban Revolution and its people? What lessons learned from that same Revolution can serve the people, their militancy and their leaders to face the current conjuncture?

**AG:** The resistance of the Cuban Revolution lies in the capacity to fight of all his people. We cannot ignore the role of driving political, of the organic of the political and social



power of Cuba. Since then the construction of this power of the people was due to the Organizational capacity generated from the strategic direction. The existence of a Nation project with high social content that is Support in an organization of Cuban society is what has guaranteed The ability to resist.

**LT: Finally, we would like to have some reflections from you on this new "wave" of progressive governments. The feeling we sometimes have is that it is an "olita", because the waves are measured not only by their size, but also by the force with which they break against the rocks, against the walls of our time. How is this progressivism with respect to the previous one? Is it being an impulse of profound processes of changes, can it become so, or is it constituting a discouraging brake on the organization of the people in the conquest of their rights?**

**AG:** Waves can be the space or temporal fluid where we should To move, that space is built by the circumstances of the epochs, by the contradictions that generate movements and searches to the new and old problems of existence of societies, which They can encompass the social, the political, the artistic and the cultural. It's like at sea, you must move in the middle of the waves with a good boat, with adequate instruments to orient you and the energy that allows you to Get where you want.

"Progressivism" is the gentle way to present a change or a transformation, so as not to frighten, not to raise fears. It is given a tone of gradualness, of going little by little and without major trauma, but trying to say "this is good". Something that is not as radical as a revolution, but something softer, more acceptable and allowed.

Could It is said that in the turbulent times of neoliberalism I would like navigate smoothly thinking that it can go unnoticed and that the U.S. imperialism would swallow the story that you just want Go to a space that is considered friendly.

Some They think that this friendly territory can be reached and for this they They require alliances that blur popular aspirations. Even though In the first moments it can work, then in the absence of Popular Force These limited changes will be countered by the right-wing forces.

It is not that progress cannot be made in stages, but that everything depends on the social and political force that pushes and defends the reforms. But for a reform to project fundamental changes in a society, modifications to the political regime are required.

For this, there must be a correlation of forces that makes it possible, that can be governed in another way, and that there are other political protagonists. And if it is a democratic



regime, it will have its litmus test by making the transition to a democratic, just and inclusive Colombia.

Source: <https://medium.com/la-tiza/la-paz-no-es-un-acuerdo-en-un-papel-sino-un-proceso-de-creaci%C3%B3n-de-nuevas-circunstancias-90922d37b8f2>

**Rebelión** has published this article with the permission of the author through a [Creative Commons license](#), respecting his freedom to publish it in other sources.