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REPORT No. 110/23 CASE 14.577

REPORT ON FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT

TEOBALDO ENRIQUE MARTINEZ FUENTES AND FAMILY COLOMBIA

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REPORT No. 110/23 CASE 14.577

FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT
TEOBALDO ENRIQUE MARTÍNEZ FUENTES AND FAMILY
COLOMBIA¹
JULY 26, 2023

I. SUMMARY AND RELEVANT PROCEEDINGS OF THE FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT PROCESS

- 1. On February 3, 2010, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (hereinafter, "the Commission" or "the IACHR") received a petition presented by Yadira Luz Martínez Fuentes, later represented by Narciso Guerra (hereinafter, "the petitioners"), alleging the international responsibility of the Republic of Colombia (hereinafter, "Colombia" or "the State") for the violation of the human rights enshrined in Articles 4 (life), 5 (humane treatment), and 22 (movement and residence) of the American Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter, "the Convention" or "the American Convention"), in conjunction with Article 1(1) (obligation to respect rights) of the same instrument, with respect to Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes and his family derived from the homicide of Mr. Martínez Fuentes by members of the Northern Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (hereinafter, "the ACCU") in the department of La Guajira, as well as through the impunity in which the facts remain and the failure to provide integral reparation for his next of kin.
- 2. On March 29, 2021, the Commission adopted Admissibility Report No. 76/21, in which it ruled the petition admissible and declared that it was competent to hear the petitioners' claim regarding the alleged violation of the rights enshrined in Articles 4 (life), 5 (humane treatment), 8 (fair trial), and 25 (judicial protection) of the American Convention, in conjunction with the obligation set forth in Article 1(1) thereof (obligation to respect rights), with respect to Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes and his family.
- 3. On September 24, 2021, the petitioners expressed their interest in initiating a friendly settlement process. The State confirmed its willingness to move forward with negotiations on October 8, 2021, and accordingly, on February 9, 2022, the Commission notified the parties of the formal commencement of the friendly settlement procedure.
- 4. On May 6, 2022, the parties signed a memorandum of understanding to work toward a friendly settlement in the present case, together with a work schedule for conducting the negotiations. Over the following months, the parties held bilateral meetings to examine the measures of reparation to be included in the friendly settlement agreement ("FSA"), which concluded with its signing in the city of Bogotá on July 26, 2022. Subsequently, on October 31, 2022, the parties submitted a joint report on progress with the implementation of the FSA and requested that the IACHR approve it.
- 5. In keeping with Article 49 of the Convention and Article 40(5) of the Commission's Rules of Procedure, this friendly settlement report contains a summary of the facts alleged by the petitioners and a transcription of the friendly settlement agreement signed by the petitioners and the Colombian State's representatives on July 26, 2022. It also approves the agreement signed by the parties and undertakes to publish this report in its Annual Report to the General Assembly of the Organization of American States.

II. THE FACTS ALLEGED

6. The petitioners alleged that the State violated the alleged victim's rights by enabling members of the Northern Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (hereinafter "ACCU"), which was operating in the department of La Guajira, to kill him. They added that the incident remains unpunished to date and that the next of kin have not received comprehensive redress.

 $^{^1}$ Commissioner Carlos Bernal Pulido, a Colombian national, did not participate in discussing or deciding this case, in compliance with Article 17(2)(a) of the IACHR's Rules of Procedure.

- 7. They reported that on March 14, 1998, a group of unidentified men, presumably members of the ACCU, shot and killed Mr. Martínez Fuentes on the outskirts of the village of El Plan in the municipality of La Jagua del Pilar, La Guajira department. They indicated that the presence of illegal armed groups made this area an epicenter of violence. On March 15, 1998, the police conducted a judicial inspection and determined that Mr. Martínez Fuentes died as a result of a gunshot wound. Likewise, the municipal ombudsman certified that the murder was triggered by ideological and political motives within the framework of the armed conflict. In spite of this, the petitioner alleged that no legal proceedings were initiated because of the fear caused by the prevailing disorder and insecurity in the area due to the presence of illegal armed groups.
- 8. The petitioner stated that on March 27, 2009, they reported the incident to the Registry of Acts Attributable to Illegal Organized Groups in La Jagua del Pilar municipality. On April 1, 2009, they requested by means of an official letter to the Office of the Attorney Delegate of the Criminal Prosecution Service, to be comprehensively repaired as a member of Mr. Martínez Fuentes's family. They further stated that on March 27, 2009, they presented an official letter to the Attorney General of the Nation requesting: (i) that a criminal investigation be conducted into the alleged victim's murder under the terms of the Justice and Peace Law of July 25, 2005 (Law No. 975), (ii) that they be recognized as a victim, and (iii) that comprehensive redress be extended to the family.
- 9. They indicated that on July 31, 2009, they presented an official letter to the Chief of the National Unit of Justice and Peace Prosecutors and to the Coordinator of Victims' Groups in the city of Bogotá, requesting that the case file be included in the database of the National Unit of Justice and Peace Prosecutors and that the case be assigned a number in order to allow its processing. Subsequently, the petitioner stated, the Attorney General's Office, through an official letter dated December 18, 2009, informed them that the Justice and Peace Unit Victims' Group had entered the file into the Justice and Peace Information System with the registration No. 265009, ACCU North Bloc, Third Prosecutor's Office. However, they contended that no progress was made with the investigation, as a result of which the crime remained unpunished for a number of years and no light was ever cast on the facts.
- 10. Accordingly, they argued that the criminal investigation carried out by the Local Unit of San Juan del Cesar, department of La Guajira, was ineffective in identifying, prosecuting, and punishing those responsible. They contended that although the alleged victim was not subject to special protection from the State, by virtue of Article 2 of the Constitution of Colombia the State was under the obligation to protect his life, honor, and property.
- 11. Finally, they emphasized that the crime was committed with the acquiescence and tolerance of agents of the State. They stressed that illegal armed groups traveled throughout the municipality of La Jagua del Pilar, displaying weapons of war and terrorizing its inhabitants, who were summoned to the main square for lengthy periods of time. She claimed that the authorities of La Guajira department, such as the Central Intelligence Office, were aware of this situation and yet took no action to prevent the crimes.

III. FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT

12. On July 26, 2022, the parties signed a friendly settlement agreement that provides as follows:

FRIENDLY SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT CASE 14.577 TEOBALDO ENRIQUE MARTÍNEZ FUENTES AND FAMILY

On July 26, 2022, the following met in the city of Bogotá: Giovanny Andrés Vega Barbosa, Director of the International Legal Defense Directorate of the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State (ANDJE), acting with due authorization on behalf of the Colombian State, hereinafter "the State" or "the Colombian State"; and Narciso Guerra Torres, on behalf of the victims, hereinafter "the petitioner", who have decided to sign this Friendly Settlement Agreement in the framework of Case 14. 577 Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes and family, ongoing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

PART ONE: DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this agreement, the following definitions shall apply:

IACHR or Inter-American Commission: The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

<u>Moral damages</u>: The harmful effects of the facts of the case that are not of an economic or monetary nature, manifested through the victims' pain, suffering, sorrow, distress, and anguish.

<u>Material damages</u>: The loss or impairment of the victim's income, the expenses incurred as a result of the facts, and the consequences of a monetary nature that have a causal link with the facts of the case.²

Non-material damages: The suffering and grief caused to the victims, the impairment of values of great personal importance, and the alterations of a non-monetary nature in the living conditions of the victim and his family.³

<u>State or Colombian State</u>: In accordance with public international law, to be understood as the signatory of the American Convention on Human Rights, hereinafter "the American Convention" or "the ACHR."

<u>Satisfaction measures</u>: Non-monetary measures that are intended to ensure the recovery of the victims from the harm they have suffered. Examples of this type of measures include the public acknowledgment of the truth and acts of redress.

Parties: The State of Colombia, the members of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes's family, and their representatives.

Acknowledgment of responsibility: Acceptance of actions and omissions attributed to the State that violate one or more of its obligations under international human rights law.

<u>Comprehensive reparation</u>: All those measures that objectively and symbolically restore the victim to the state prior to the harm caused.

Representative of the victims: Dr. Narciso Guerra Torres.

Friendly settlement: An alternative dispute resolution mechanism, used for peaceful and consensual settlements before the Inter-American Commission.

Victims: The members of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes's family.

PART TWO: BACKGROUND

1. On February 3, 2010, the Inter-American Commission received a petition lodged by Mrs. Yadira Luz Martínez Fuentes in connection with the murder of her brother, Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes, on March 14, 1998, on the outskirts of the village of El Plan in the municipality of La Jagua del Pilar, department of La Guajira.

² I/A Court H. R. *Case of the Serrano Cruz Sisters v. El Salvador*. Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of March 1, 2005. Series C No. 120, para. 150.

³ I/A Court H. R. *Case of Caesar v. Trinidad and Tobago*. Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of March 11, 2005. Series C No. 123, para. 125.

- Regarding the background to the case, the initial petition states that the murder was committed by a group of unidentified men, allegedly members of the Northern Bloc of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia operating in La Guajira department.⁴
- On December 20, 2011, the Attorney General's Office opened a preliminary investigation into the facts of the case.5
- On May 15, 2015, by means of Resolution No. 009 of January 26, 2015, the Law 600 Processing Unit was established in Riohacha, La Guajira, as a result of which the proceedings were referred to the First Delegate Prosecutor before the Criminal Judges of the Riohacha Circuit. The First Delegate Prosecutor took cognizance on July 29, 2016, ordered the gathering of evidence to establish the facts of the case, but failed to obtain the information necessary to identify the perpetrators of the actions under investigation.⁶
- 5. Finally, by means of Resolution No. 038 of March 24, 2021, the Prosecutor's Office decided to send the proceedings to the archive since statutory limitations had been triggered, and that decision became final on April 21, 2021.7
- On May 6, 2022, the Memorandum of Understanding toward a Friendly Settlement was signed.
- Over the following months, the parties held joint meetings to examine the 7. reparation measures to be included in the Friendly Settlement Agreement that has now been signed.

PART THREE: BENEFICIARIES

The Colombian State recognizes the following persons as victims in this agreement:

Name	Identity Card No.	Relationship
Yadira Luz Martínez Fuentes	[]	Sister
Nelis Felicia Fuentes	[]	Sister

The victims recognized in this Friendly Settlement Agreement shall benefit provided they can prove their relationship by consanguinity with Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes.

Additionally, the victims who shall benefit from this Friendly Settlement Agreement will be those who were alive at the time of the victimizing event⁸ and are alive at the time of the signing of the Agreement.

PART FOUR: ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Colombian State acknowledges its international responsibility by omission in the violation of the rights enshrined in Articles 8 (right to a fair trial) and 25 (judicial protection) of the American Convention, in conjunction with Article 1(1) thereof (obligation to respect rights), with respect to the family of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes, due to the lack

Admissibility Report No. 76/21, para. 2.

Office of the Attorney General. Deed dated September 28, 2021. File No. 2021170066151.

In keeping with the jurisprudence of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. See: I/A Court H. R. Case of the Afro-descendant Communities displaced from the Cacarica River Basin (Operation Genesis) v. Colombia. Preliminary Objections, Merits, Reparations, and Costs. Judgment of November 20, 2013. Series C No. 270, para. 425.

of diligence in the investigation of the facts that resulted in the failure to identify, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators of his murder.

PART FIVE: SATISFACTION MEASURES

The Colombian State undertakes to carry out the following satisfaction measure:

i. Act of Acknowledgment of Responsibility

The Colombian State shall hold a Public Act of Acknowledgment of Responsibility, in virtual format, with the participation of the family of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes and the petitioner. The act shall be conducted in accordance with the terms of the acknowledgment of responsibility set out in this Agreement.

This measure shall be performed by the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State.

ii. Publication of the Article 49 Report

The Colombian State will publish the pertinent sections of the friendly settlement report, once it has been approved by the Inter-American Commission, on the web page of the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State, for a period of six (6) months.

PART SIX: HEALTH AND REHABILITATION MEASURES

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in exercise of the powers described in Decree Law 4107 of 2011, shall coordinate health rehabilitation measures, consisting of medical, psychological, and psychosocial care, through the General Social Security Health System and its constituent bodies, as well as through the Psychosocial Care and Comprehensive Health Program for Victims (PAPSIVI), in order to ensure adequate, timely, and priority treatment for as long as necessary (in accordance with medical criteria), in keeping with the applicable legal provisions.

In providing psychological treatment and psychosocial care, the particular circumstances and needs of each person must be considered, so that they are provided with family and individual treatment according to the agreements reached with each of them and after individual assessments based on respect for autonomy and voluntary access.

To ensure their access to comprehensive health care, the beneficiaries of the measures shall be guaranteed timely and quality access to the medicines and treatments required (including physical and mental health) in keeping with the rules governing the SGSSS, and they shall have priority and differential attention by virtue of their status as victims.

These measures will be implemented following the signing of the friendly settlement agreement.9

PART SEVEN: COMPENSATION MEASURES

The State undertakes to initiate the procedure under Law 288 of 1996 "Whereby instruments are established for the compensation of damages to the victims of human rights violations by virtue of the provisions of certain international human rights bodies". The procedure will be initiated once the present friendly settlement agreement is homologated through the issuance of the Article 49 Report of the American Convention, with the purpose of repairing the

Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Deed of July 14, 2022. File No. 20221610379281.

damages caused to the relatives of the victims as a consequence of the effects generated by the facts of the present case.

The National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State shall be the entity in charge of assuming the procedure provided by Law 288 of 1996.

For the purposes of redressing and verifying the harm caused, the criteria and amounts recognized by the current jurisprudence of the Council of State shall be used.

PART SEVEN: APPROVAL AND MONITORING

The parties request that the Inter-American Commission approve and monitor this Agreement.

The parties, having read this Agreement and being aware of its scope and legal content, hereby sign it on July 26, 2022.

IV. DETERMINATION OF COMPATIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

- 13. The IACHR reiterates that in accordance with Articles 48(1)(f) and 49 of the American Convention, the purpose of this procedure is to "reach a friendly settlement of the matter based on respect for the human rights recognized in the Convention." The acceptance to pursue this process expresses the good faith of the State to comply with the purposes and objectives of the Convention pursuant to the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, by which States must comply with the obligations assumed in the treaties in good faith. It also wishes to reiterate that the friendly settlement procedure set forth in the Convention allows for conclusion of individual cases in a non-contentious manner, and has proven, in cases involving a variety of countries, to provide an important vehicle for resolution that can be used by both parties.
- 14. The Inter-American Commission has closely followed the development of the friendly settlement reached in this case and it appreciates the efforts made by both parties during the negotiations toward this friendly settlement agreement, which is compatible with the object and purpose of the Convention.
- 15. In accordance with the agreement signed by the parties in which they requested that the Commission approve the friendly settlement agreement as provided for in Article 49 of the American Convention, and taking into consideration the parties' request of October 31, 2022, to move forward in this regard, it is appropriate at this time to assess compliance with the commitments set forth in the agreement.
- 16. The Inter-American Commission finds that clauses one ("Definitions"), two ("Background"), three ("Beneficiaries"), and four ("Acknowledgment of Responsibility") of the agreement are declarative in nature, and therefore it is not appropriate to supervise their compliance. Nevertheless, the Commission values the fourth declarative clause, in which the Colombian State recognizes its international responsibility by omission for the violation of the rights protected by Articles 8 (fair trial) and 25 (judicial protection) of the American Convention, in conjunction with Article 1(1) thereof (obligation to respect rights), with respect to the family of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes through the lack of diligence in investigating the facts that occurred, which resulted in the failure to identify, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators of his murder.
- 17. Regarding section (i), *Act of Acknowledgment of Responsibility*, of clause five ("Satisfaction Measures"), following the signing of the FSA the parties jointly reported that they agreed that the nature of said act would be private and that it duly took place on September 22, 2022. The parties reported the existence of permanent, fluid communications between the State and the petitioners, who agreed on each of the details for the fulfillment of the measure, including the date, time, agenda, and logistics required for it to take place. The

Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, U.N. Doc A/CONF.39/27 (1969), Article 26: "Pacta sunt servanda" Every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith.

parties also provided a simple copy of two images of the event, which was attended by the victim's relatives and their representative and by the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State.

18. Likewise, the parties reported on the contents of the agenda agreed upon for the event, which included an opening ceremony, the Colombian national anthem, the projection of a video in memory of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes, and addresses by Ms. Yadira Luz Martínez Fuentes, the victim's sister, and by Mr. Narciso Guerra, the victims' representative. The State's intervention was made by the ANDJE Director of International Legal Defense, who asked for forgiveness from the victims and their families for what had happened and acknowledged the State's responsibility under the terms set forth in the friendly settlement agreement signed between the parties, stating the following:

[...]

On behalf of the State of Colombia and as Director General of the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State, it is an honor to be with you today, not only to acknowledge the responsibility of the State in this painful event, but also to honor the memory of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes who, on March 14, 1998, was the victim of homicide on the outskirts of the village of El Plan in the municipality of La Jagua del Pilar, La Guajira department.

[...]

Taking into account the time that elapsed before the investigation was opened and the fact that the proceedings have since been archived, the Colombian State acknowledges its responsibility for the lack of due diligence in the investigation of the events of March 14, 1998, which resulted in the failure to identify, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes's murder. This is even more keenly true because the Colombian State was under the obligation to investigate, prosecute, and punish those responsible, which did not happen in this case and which caused immense pain and irreparable consequences for the members of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes's family.

It is precisely in recognition of the harm inflicted on Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes's family that today the State is asking for their forgiveness. Thus, in my capacity as Director General of the National Agency for the Legal Defense of the State and in compliance with one of the measures agreed on in the Friendly Settlement Agreement signed on July 26, 2022, I acknowledge the international responsibility of the Colombian State by omission for the violation of the rights enshrined in Articles 8 (right to a fair trial) and 25 (right to judicial protection) of the American Convention on Human Rights, in conjunction with Article 1(1) thereof (obligation to respect rights), with respect to the family of Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes through the lack of diligence in the investigation of the events that occurred, which resulted in the failure to identify, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators of his murder.

19. In turn, Commissioner Joel Hernández, the IACHR's Rapporteur for Colombia, offered the following remarks:

[...]

The facts of the case that have brought us together today relate to the failure to investigate his murder on March 14, 1998. This traumatic event left his family in mourning and, faced with an absence of answers in their search for the truth, turned to the system of petitions and individual cases before the Inter-American system.

Today we must begin by remembering those facts, in this solemn ceremony, we remember Teobaldo Martínez's life, we hear the silence left by his absence, and we recognize the pain inflicted on his family and their struggle to assert their rights.

The Commission values the recognition of international responsibility made today at this ceremony by the Colombian State, for its failure to guarantee the rights to a fair trial and to judicial protection enshrined in the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights with respect to Mr. Teobaldo Enrique Martínez Fuentes and his family through the lack of diligence in the investigation of the events that occurred, which led to the failure to punish those responsible. Accordingly, the Commission hopes that this acknowledgment of responsibility will offer some form of redress for the Martínez Fuentes family and that it will allow them to begin to heal the wounds caused by the violations they suffered. May helplessness be transformed into empowerment through this friendly settlement process, and may this contribute to full reparation for the harm caused.

We further hope that this public acknowledgment of responsibility by the State will continue to contribute to building a relationship of trust between the parties, leading to full compliance with the obligations that the Colombian State has assumed under this agreement. [...]

- 20. Taking the foregoing into account, together with the information provided jointly by the parties, the Commission finds that section (i) of clause five of the friendly settlement agreement, relating to the act of acknowledgment of responsibility, has been fully complied with and it declares it as such.
- 21. Regarding section (ii), *Publication of the Article 49 Report*, of clause five ("Satisfaction Measures") of the friendly settlement agreement, as well as clause six ("Health and Rehabilitation Measures") and clause seven ("Compensation Measures") thereof, and by virtue of the parties' joint request that progress be made with the approval of the agreement prior to its execution, the Commission notes that those measures are to be complied with following the publication of this report. It therefore finds and duly declares that they are pending compliance. In consideration whereof, the Commission will await updated information from the parties on their implementation following the approval of this report.
- 22. In view of the foregoing, the Commission finds and duly declares that section (i), *Act of Acknowledgment of Responsibility*, of the fifth clause has been fully complied with and declares it as such. At the same time, the Commission finds and duly declares that section (ii), *Publication of the Article 49 Report*, of clause five ("Satisfaction Measures") of the friendly settlement agreement, as well as clause six ("Health and Rehabilitation Measures") and clause seven ("Compensation Measures") thereof, are still pending compliance. Accordingly, the Commission finds that the friendly settlement agreement has been partially implemented and declares it as such. Finally, the Commission again notes that the remainder of the agreement's content is of a declarative nature and that therefore ins not incumbent to the IACHR to supervise its compliance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Based on the foregoing and in keeping with the procedure provided for in Articles 48(1)(f) and 49 of the American Convention, the Commission would like to reiterate its profound appreciation of the efforts made by the parties and its satisfaction that a friendly settlement has been arrived at in the present case on the basis of respect for human rights and consistent with the object and purpose of the American Convention.
 - 2. Based on the considerations and conclusions contained in this report,

THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

DECIDES:

1. To approve the terms of the agreement signed by the parties on July 26, 2022.

- 2. To declare that section (i), *Act of Acknowledgment of Responsibility*, of clause five of the friendly settlement agreement has been fully complied with, as indicated by the analysis presented in this report.
- 3. To declare that section (ii), *Publication of the Article 49 Report*, of clause five ("Satisfaction Measures") of the friendly settlement agreement, together with clause six ("Health and Rehabilitation Measures") and clause seven ("Compensation Measures") thereof, remain pending compliance, as indicated by the analysis presented in this report.
- 4. To declare that the friendly settlement agreement has a level of partial compliance, as indicated by the analysis presented in this report.
- 5. To continue monitoring the commitments assumed in section (ii), *Publication of the Article 49 Report*, of clause five ("Satisfaction Measures") of the friendly settlement agreement, as well as clause six ("Health and Rehabilitation Measures") and clause seven ("Compensation Measures") thereof, as indicated by the analysis presented in this report, and, to that end, to remind the parties of their commitment to report to the IACHR on a regular basis regarding their implementation.
 - 6. To publish this report and to include it in its Annual Report to the OAS General Assembly.

Approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on the 26th day of the month of July, 2023. (Signed:) Margarette May Macaulay, President; Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Vice President; Roberta Clarke, Second Vice President; Joel Hernández García, Julissa Mantilla Falcón and Stuardo Ralón Orellana, Commissioners.