



## Internal Divisions within the FARC and the Reaction of Remaining and Dissident FARC Members

**OE Watch Commentary:** Two years after the FARC signed an agreement with the Colombian government at the Colon Theatre in Bogotá, true cracks within the group are beginning to show and it is a split that can no longer be hidden behind claims that the disbandment of the group has been a true success. At the close of the peace talks, the FARC, the Colombian government and even outsiders knew that not all members would disarm. The top FARC leadership, who are believed to only have come forward with the peace agreement in order to avoid prison time, have been accused of misappropriating resources, adding to further distrust by lower-ranking members. These factors are just a few of the problems that are causing internal fractures within the group. Other factors discussed in the accompanying excerpted article from *El Tiempo* include the death of top FARC Commander Pedro Antonio Marin (aka Manuel Marulanda) in 2008 and his replacement, Guillermo Leon Saenz Vargas, who was seen more as an intellectual than a guerrilla commander.

Saenz Vargas was killed in 2011 and he was succeeded by Rodrigo Londono Echeverri (aka Timochenko), who actually sped up peace talks with President Manuel Santos. To those guerrilla fighters who were still active, they viewed the expedited process as a betrayal to the group, as indicated in the excerpted article from *El Pais*. It has been noted that the FARC leadership proved incapable of generating an atmosphere of unity surrounding the peace process and the post-agreement politics caused more disagreements and problems for the group.

While many of the former FARC members have demobilized, there is still a large contingent that never approved of the terms of the peace agreement. For this reason, FARC dissidents have simply shifted into other criminal groups within Colombia or have moved to countries looking to recruit FARC members, such as Mexico and Brazil. Those who have stayed on with the FARC are frustrated because they are barely making a living by moving from coca production to legitimate crops. Finally, as discussed in the last article from *El Pais*, those same dissidents still residing in Colombia may work together with other criminal groups to get back the wealthiest FARC fronts still dedicated to illegal activity in the country, despite the peace agreement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

*“These members claim that those higher up in the chain of command have mutually discredited themselves in addition to suspicious handling of resources.”*

**Source:** “La fractura en el FARC, profunda y inocultable (Divisions within the FARC, Profound and Impossible to Hide),” *El Tiempo*, 2 September 2018. <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/proceso-de-paz/la-fractura-en-la-farc-profunda-e-inocultable-263260>

*Divisions between top FARC leadership has been escalating since the start of the Peace Talks in Havana as select key leaders wanted to remain a subversive group, while others wanted to completely give up cocaine production/trafficking. Other factors associated with internal FARC division are distrust of lower ranking members with their key leadership. These members claim that those higher up in the chain of command have mutually discredited themselves in addition to suspicious handling of resources. Other factors that have caused divisions from the past include fast paced changes in leadership due to the deaths of key leaders to include top FARC Commander Pedro Antonio Marin aka Manuel Marulanda in 2008 (he had been in charge of the group for 44 years at the time of his death). His replacement was named as Guillermo Leon Saenz Vargas who introduced a new type of leadership and influence within the FARC in which the “rural” style disappeared and was replaced with a more “intellectual” style.*

**Source:** “Timochenko’ analizó las disputas internas en la Farc y evitó referirse a Iván Márquez (Timochenko Analyzes Internal Disputes within the FARC and Fails to Mention anything about Iván Márquez),” *El Pais*, 8 October 2018. <https://www.elpais.com.co/proceso-de-paz/timochenko-analiza-las-disputas-internas-en-la-farc-y-evito-referirse-a-ivan-marquez.html>

*It was evident then that the FARC was already experiencing a crisis that was unprecedented in its history, without military alternatives to solve it. In the armed field, the insurgent group was withdrawing with few options for recovery. On the other hand, accusations started to arise within the FARC to point out those responsible for that military disaster, and blamed FARC negotiators in Havana indicating the following: “Those in Havana are the politicians, but not those who have fought in the mountains in Colombia. Now some bosses appear with a rifle only to have their picture taken.” Timochenko in particular received significant blowback from FARC followers as they felt he tried to move the Peace Process ahead too quickly without taking into account what the group as a whole wanted.*

**Source:** “El paradero desconocido de lideres de las FARC despierta preocupacion en Colombia (The Unknown Location of FARC leaders Raises Concern in Colombia),” *El Pais*, 13 September 2018. [https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/09/12/colombia/1536774123\\_549145.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2018/09/12/colombia/1536774123_549145.html)

*The wealthiest fronts of the FARC are those in the Southern Bloc, especially the 48th and 2nd fronts, because of their high levels of cocaine production. These Blocs are led by high level FARC leaders who are not required to remain in areas of reconciliation as are lower ranking FARC members who now feel marginalized. Furthermore, any surplus from the aforementioned Front’s are given to other high level FARC leaders. Discontent regarding what is happening with high level leadership has led to the idea that dissident FARC members may attempt to take power back from current FARC leaders, but at this point, that idea is simply speculation due to the cost of what it would take to do so and the violence that would invariably ensue.*