



# Victims of Language

## The Definition of Victims in Colombia's Peace Agreement

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The public phase of the dialogue between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP took place in Havana from September 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2012 to August 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2016. The Final Agreement was signed on November 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2016.

Both groups stated that *'redress for victims is at the core of the agreement between the National Government and the FARC-EP'*

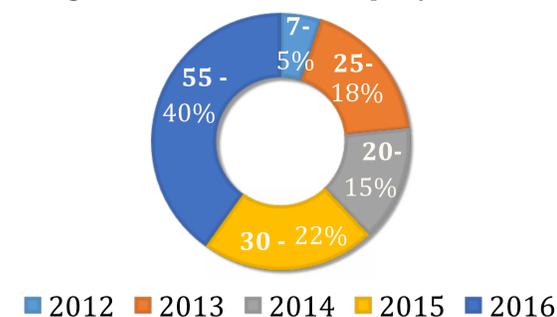
Since there is no *transitional justice process* that does not claim to be established in favor of the victims, it is legitimate to analyze if the language on victims used in the documents of the negotiations held in Havana and in the Final Agreement, supports this centrality on the *victims*.

### Data & Methodology

Table1. The 137 documents of the Negotiation Table.

Group	Type of document	Amount
Final Agreement		1
HCCCV*	Relatorías	2
	Reports	10
General Documents	Reports	4
	Drafts of Joint Agreements	13
	Joint Media Releases	107

Fig1. Documents released per year



### Methods of Language Analysis:

- Natural Language Processing Techniques: Keywords and topic extraction, text tagging, and semantic networks.
- Close Reading of the most relevant documents.

### The Moment of the Victims

#### Drafts of Joint Agreements

'victim-' barely shows up in the first three preliminary agreements (rural reform, illicit drugs and political participation) signed prior the discussion draft on victims.

#### Joint Media Releases

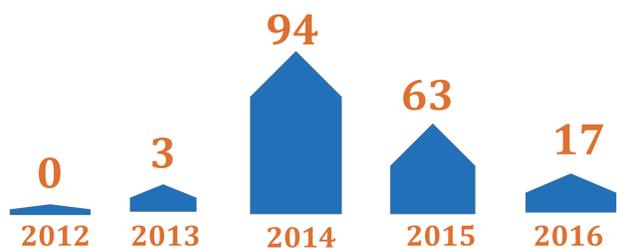


Fig2. Occurrences of 'victim(s)' in Joint Media Releases

#### All documents

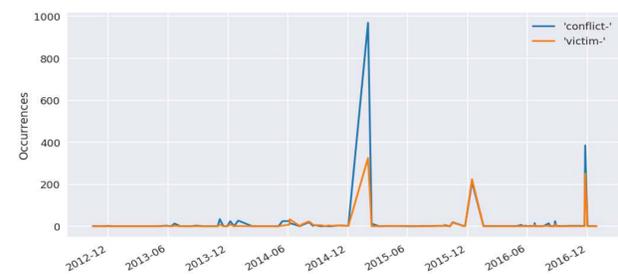
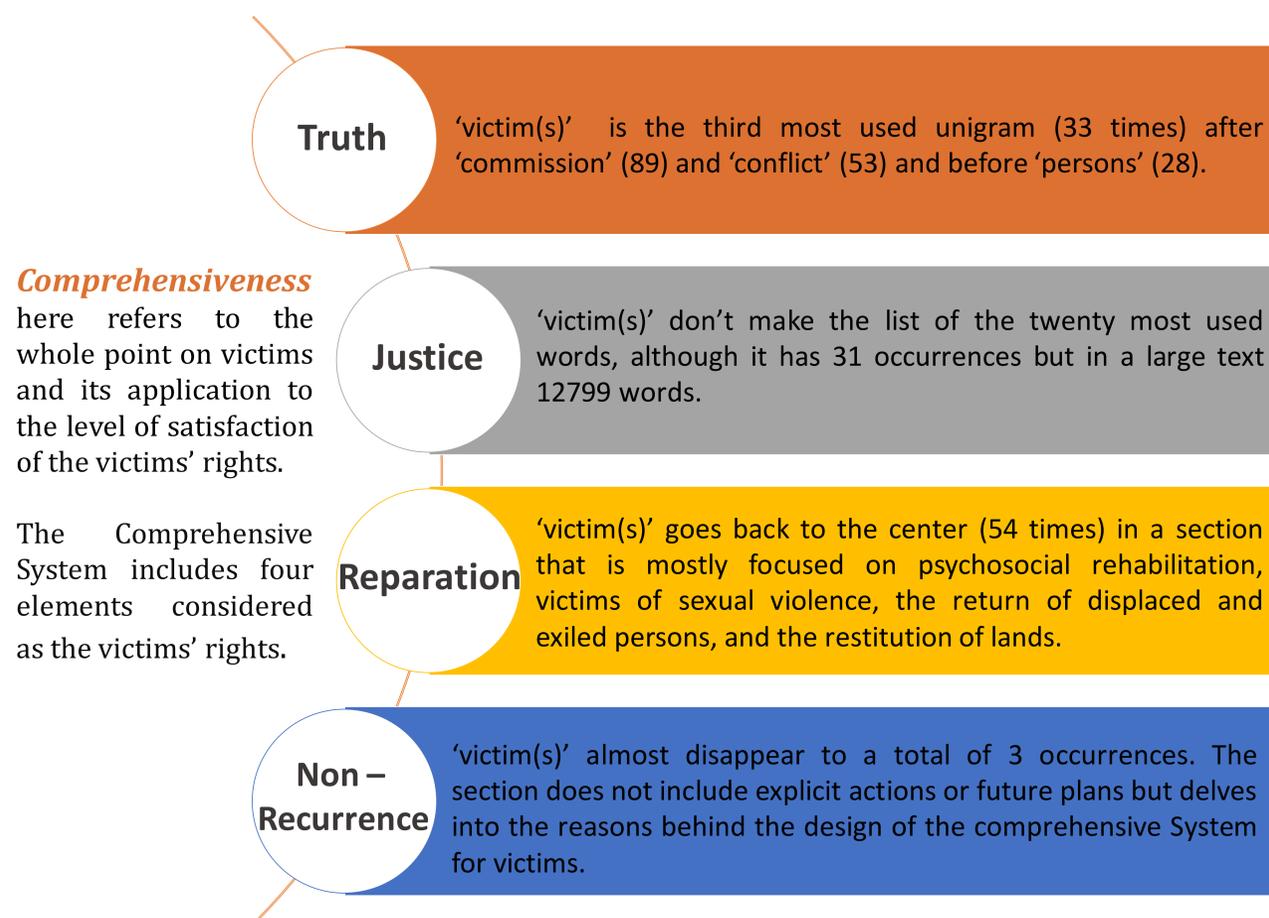


Fig3. Total occurrences of 'conflict-' and 'victim-'.

**Victims play a salient linguistic role only in very specific moments of the negotiations and are mostly absent when the parties talk about issues other than the item on victims.**

### The Language of the Comprehensive System of Transitional Justice



**Comprehensiveness** here refers to the whole point on victims and its application to the level of satisfaction of the victims' rights.

The Comprehensive System includes four elements considered as the victims' rights.

The need of creating systems of transitional justice that compensate the victims and allow for the reintegration of perpetrators into society and that return both victims and victimizers to the condition of citizens is generally agreed to be worthwhile.

### Expanding the Description of Victims

Victims are fluid in two respects:

#### Victims - Language

- Number and composition are open and can be extended if the conditions for their description change.
- The signals of victimization occupy a wide and somehow continuing spectrum and they need to be expressed through a more nuanced and complex language.

#### Victims - Time

- Since the condition of victim cannot be described in binary terms, but as a succession of states started by certain forms of violence, this succession is to be expressed in some manner in the language of the agreement so that it can be acted upon.
- This succession of states would end up with the transition of victims into full citizens and members of their communities. Then, victims will become past victims and peace might become a reality, individually and collectively.

**We recommend that, in future negotiations:**

The parts in conflict test the content of the documents to make sure that their public declarations and the principles that inspire the negotiations are really reflected in the language choices they make.

Natural Language Processing and Artificial Intelligence tools are a cheap and efficient method to automatically reading the documents and test the linguistic assumptions of the negotiators.

However, if the goals and promises inserted in the Comprehensive System are not fulfilled during its implementation, then the risk of re-victimization will be higher.

\*HCCCV: Historical Commission of the Conflict and its Victims