

Why it is necessary and desirable that the Colombian truth commission has the authority to make findings of collective responsibility in its final report:

1. It avoids outside pressure to create a truth commission with the power to make findings of individual responsibility, which would judicialise the proceedings and put everyone's legal security at risk.
2. A truth commission cannot write a proper final report if it cannot explain its most important findings. These naturally include findings about the scope and nature of collective responsibilities.
3. Making findings of collective responsibility can help correct dangerous and mistaken accounts of the historical facts – including in relation to the armed forces.
4. If the truth commission does not have the authority to make findings of collective responsibility, the issue will, in the case of the State, end up being addressed judicially. This would be very costly and produce a raft of cases against the State.
5. Making such findings is the precondition for the commission to justify and for the public to understand the recommendations it makes in the realm of positive institutional and organisational reforms.
6. Making findings of collective responsibility is a precondition for knowing, but also acknowledging, what really happened in the conflict. Otherwise any type of lie or myth can continue to circulate, endangering the country's ability to end violence.
7. The authority to make findings of collective responsibility is something every commission has done – without exception. It is an intrinsic, minimal part of the definition and identity of all truth commissions.