

Armed Conflicts and Their Impact on Biodiversity Preservation in Colombia: A Legal and Ethical Analysis

Mohammadreza Jodyvash

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3341-6304>

Shiraz University, Iran

E-mail address: jvmohammad57@gmail.com

Received: April 6th, 2025

Accepted: May 9th, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22201/ijj.24485306e.2025.1.20094>

Abstract: This article adopts an analytical approach to examine the environmental impacts of illegal activities and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in Colombia. Through a deep analysis of the relationship between resource exploitation and violence, it demonstrates how armed conflicts and illegal resource extractions have led to habitat destruction and loss of biodiversity. Case studies, such as the devastating effects of armed conflicts on the Amazon rainforest and the use of chemicals, such as glyphosate to combat illegal crops, provide a comprehensive picture of the crisis. The research results reveal that Colombia's existing laws have the potential to transform the long-standing relationship between human beings and the environment into a more ethical and respectful one. However, to achieve greater effectiveness, the legal framework needs to be strengthened and aligned with contemporary ethical and environmental perspectives. This article also emphasizes that legal reforms may place Colombia as a leader in animal protection and environmental sustainability in Latin America.

Keywords: armed conflicts; biodiversity preservation; Colombia; colombian armed forces.

Resumen: Este artículo adopta un enfoque analítico para examinar los impactos ambientales de las actividades ilegales y la explotación insostenible de los recursos naturales en Colombia. A través de un análisis profundo de la relación entre la explotación de recursos y la violencia, demuestra cómo los conflictos armados y la extracción ilegal de recursos han provocado la destrucción del hábitat y la pérdida de biodiversidad. Estudios de caso, como los efectos devastadores de los conflictos armados en la selva amazónica y el uso de químicos como el glifosato para combatir cultivos ilegales, ofrecen un panorama completo de la crisis. Los hallazgos revelan

que las leyes vigentes en Colombia tienen el potencial de transformar la relación histórica entre los seres humanos y el medio ambiente hacia una más ética y respetuosa. Sin embargo, para lograr una mayor efectividad, el marco legal necesita ser fortalecido y alineado con perspectivas éticas y ambientales contemporáneas. El artículo también enfatiza que las reformas legales podrían posicionar a Colombia como líder en protección animal y sostenibilidad ambiental en América Latina.

Palabras clave: conflictos armados; conservación de la biodiversidad; Colombia; fuerzas armadas de Colombia.

Summary: I. *Introduction*. II. *The Importance of Biodiversity in Colombia*. III. *Animals in War: Silent Victims Amidst Human Devastation*. IV. *Irreparable Damages of Armed Conflicts on Green areas in Colombia*. V. *The Impact of Human Relations on Biodiversity and Proposals for the Future in Colombia*. VI. *Conclusion*. VII. *References*.

I. Introduction

Colombia, one of the countries with the greatest biodiversity of the world, harbors ecosystems of critical importance for the planet's environmental health. Despite of its rich natural heritage, the country has faced severe ecological challenges, predominantly due to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and the devastating effects of protracted armed conflicts. These conflicts have intensified deforestation, habitat destruction, and loss of biodiversity, directly linking violence to ecological degradation.¹ The exploitation of natural resources, often unregulated, has fueled illegal activities and deepened socio-economic inequalities, disproportionately affecting rural and indigenous communities that rely on these ecosystems for their livelihoods.²

This study investigates the environmental impact of such dynamics, emphasizing the urgent need to recognize biodiversity rights as an integral to the broader framework of justice and the repair of damage. It examines whether the current legal frameworks in Colombia sufficiently address the complex interplay between armed conflict, biodiversity preservation, and the welfare of sentient beings. By focusing on specific cases, such as the use of glyphosate in combating illegal crops and the destruction caused by paramilitary operations, the study highlights how the absence of effective regulations exacerbates environmental and societal harm.

Results reveal that overexploitation of resources has significantly diminished Colombia's biodiversity, raising the pressing question: What are the implications of armed conflict on the rights of sensitive beings and biodiversity? The findings advocate for an ethical and legal evolution that prioritizes the protec-

¹ Carlos A. Sierra et al., *Monitoring Ecological Change During Rapid Socio-Economic and Political Transitions: Colombian Ecosystems in the Post-Conflict Era*, 76 ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & POLICY 40, 41 (2017).

² Rebecca M. Bratspies, *Territory is Everything: Afro-Colombian Communities, Human Rights and Illegal Land Grabs*, 4 COLOMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS L. REV. (2020).

tion and restoration of natural habitats and species. Recognizing biodiversity rights is not merely a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for building sustainable communities and addressing long-standing ecological injustices.

The introduction of progressive environmental and animal welfare laws in Colombia marks a step forward. Yet, challenges remain in their implementation and enforcement. A shift from anthropocentric perspectives toward eco-centric and biocentric approaches is vital. This transformation needs a more integrated legal and ethical framework, fostering a harmonious coexistence between human beings, animals, and environment. By embracing such a paradigm, Colombia has the potential to lead Latin America (including Colombia) in to sustainable development and biodiversity preservation, setting a global example in the process.³

This article is structured as follows: To address the research question, it first examines the significance of biodiversity in Colombia. Next, it explores the vulnerability of animals and biodiversity during periods of conflict. Following that, the relationship between armed conflict, deforestation, and environmental violence in Colombia is being analyzed. Based on these assessments, this article proposes a transformation in the human relationship with biodiversity and animals, advocating for the adoption of legislation with more empathetic perspectives toward their rights. Finally, a conclusion is presented.

II. The Importance of Biodiversity in Colombia

Colombia is renowned as one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, boasting a wide array of ecosystems ranging from tropical rainforests and Andean highlands to wetlands and coastal mangroves. This remarkable biodiversity holds immense importance, not only for the country itself, but also for global environmental health.⁴ Home to about 10% of the planet's species, Colombia's ecosystems serve as critical habitats for countless endemic and endangered species, including jaguars, spectacled bears, and the iconic Andean condor.⁵ The vast Amazon rainforest in Colombia plays a vital role in regulating global climate by acting as a carbon sink, absorbing large quantities of CO₂, and releasing oxygen.⁶ Biodiversity also underpins the livelihoods of millions of Colombians, particularly indigenous communities who have lived in

³ Laura Ordoñez-Vargas, L. C. Peralta González & Enrique Prieto-Ríos, *An Econcentric Turn in the Transitional Restorative Justice Process in Colombia*, 17 INT'L J. OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE 107 (2023).

⁴ Diego Andrés Villate Daza et al., *Mangrove Forests Evolution and Threats in the Caribbean Sea of Colombia*, 12 WATER 1113, 1-3 (2020).

⁵ Enrique Arbeláez-Cortés, *Knowledge of Colombian Biodiversity: Published and Indexed*, 22 BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION 2875, 3 (2013).

⁶ GLORIA DICKIE, EIGHT BEARS: MYTHIC PAST AND IMPERILED FUTURE (WW Norton & Company, 1st. ed., 2023).

harmony with nature for centuries. These communities rely on diverse plant and animal species for food, medicine, and cultural practices, by making biodiversity an integral part of their heritage and survival.⁷ Furthermore, Colombia's rich biological resources fuel its economy through agriculture, ecotourism, and natural resource extraction.⁸ Coffee plantations, fruit farms, and fishing industries benefit directly from the pollinators, fertile soils, and clean water that healthy ecosystems provide.⁹ However, Colombia's biodiversity is under constant threat due to deforestation, illegal mining, agricultural expansion, and climate change. Forests are being cleared for cattle ranching and coca cultivation, leading to habitat destruction and species loss. In response, Colombia has taken steps to conserve its biodiversity, such as establishing national parks, promoting sustainable practices, and participating in international agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity.¹⁰ These efforts aim to strike a balance between development and conservation, ensuring that future generations can inherit a thriving natural environment. The preservation of Colombia's biodiversity is not only a moral and ecological obligation but also a strategic necessity for the country's sustainable development and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.¹¹

III. Animals in War: Silent Victims Amidst Human Devastation

Disruptions to ecosystems and the reduction of biodiversity have profound consequences for animals, leading to imbalances that affect both the health of ecosystems and the stability of food chains, particularly during conflicts where such disruptions are exacerbated. The absence of specific legal protections for animals in conflict situations significantly increases their vulnerability, as the lack of clear protective frameworks, which leaves animals exposed to multiple threats, such as habitat destruction, overhunting, and deliberate or unintentional neglect.¹² Without effective legislation, emergency measures to safeguard animals

⁷ Edna Rödiger et al., *The Importance of Forest Structure for Carbon Fluxes of the Amazon Rainforest*, 13 ENVIRONMENTAL RSCH. LETTERS 054013, 2 (2018).

⁸ Giovanni Garavito et al., *Assessment of Biodiversity Goods for the Sustainable Development of the Chagra in an Indigenous Community of the Colombian Amazon: Local Values of Crops*, 17 J. OF ETHNOBIOLOGY AND ETHNOMEDICINE 1, 2-3 (2021).

⁹ Diana Ojeda, *Green Pretexts: Ecotourism, Neoliberal Conservation and Land Grabbing in Tayrona National Natural Park, Colombia*, in GREEN GRABBING: A NEW APPROPRIATION OF NATURE 369 (Routledge, 1st ed., 2014).

¹⁰ Andrés González-González, Nicola Clerici & Benjamin Quesada, *Growing Mining Contribution to Colombian Deforestation*, 16 ENVIRONMENTAL RSCH. LETTERS 064046, 2, 9 (2021).

¹¹ John Heath & Hans Binswanger, *Natural Resource Degradation Effects of Poverty and Population Growth Are Largely Policy-Induced: The Case of Colombia*, 1 ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS 65 (1996).

¹² Pablo José Negret et al., *Need for Conservation Planning in Postconflict Colombia*, CONSERVATION

amidst, the chaos of conflict rarely succeed. As human beings, priorities often overshadow animal welfare concerns. This not only exacerbates the suffering of animals but also jeopardizes the ecosystems that depend on them, as key species—such as pollinators, apex predators, and keystone species crucial for maintaining ecological balance—are either wiped out or displaced from their habitats. Such imbalances trigger cascading effects throughout the food chain, potentially collapsing local agriculture, increasing hunger, and undermining human livelihoods.¹³ Moreover, domesticated and wild animals directly affected by war, often find themselves deprived of vital resources such as water, food, or veterinary care, a situation that amplifies widespread mortality and accelerates the extinction of vulnerable species. The lack of specialized and enforceable laws to protect animals during conflicts means that even when humanitarian organizations and institutions seek to provide assistance, they often lack the tools or authority to act effectively. Consequently, animals become not only direct victims of war's violence but also suffer from indirect consequences, such as environmental contamination caused by chemical warfare or the destruction of natural resources, further fueling long-term ecological crises.¹⁴

Environmental models, both nationally and internationally, require significant advancements in incorporating animal rights into laws and policies, as these rights have been largely overlooked. This issue becomes even more critical in the context of armed conflicts and their devastating effects on biodiversity and animal welfare. As Padilla notes, “there is a significant gap in recognizing animal rights within the judicial system and in legal guarantees for their protection”.¹⁵ This gap not only results in the systematic neglect of the needs and welfare of animals under normal circumstances but also exposes them to far greater and more extensive threats during crises such as armed conflicts. The absence of comprehensive and enforceable laws to protect animals leaves them vulnerable to threats like habitat destruction, overhunting, illegal exploitation, and even deliberate or passive mistreatment. This negligence has severe consequences not only for various species and natural habitats, but also indirectly for human communities. The reduction of biodiversity and the destruction of key species disrupt ecological balance, food chains, and the livelihoods of people who depend on these ecosystems. Moreover, as Elias¹⁶ highlights,

BIOLOGY (2017).

¹³ Sandra E. Baker, Trudy M. Sharp & David W. MacDonald, *Assessing Animal Welfare Impacts in the Management of European Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), European Moles (*Talpa europaea*) and Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone*)*, 11 PLOS ONE e0146298 (2016).

¹⁴ MINISTERIO DE SALUD Y PROTECCIÓN SOCIAL, PLAN DECENAL DE SALUD PÚBLICA 2022-2031 (2022), https://www.minsalud.gov.co/Normatividad_Nuevo/Resoluci%C3%B3n%20No.%201035%20de%202022.pdf

¹⁵ ALEJANDRO PADILLA, *SENTIENT LAW: NON-HUMAN ANIMALS IN LATIN AMERICAN LAW* (Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2022).

¹⁶ Guillermo Elias, *Environmental Protection in Times of Armed Conflict: An Analysis of International Humanitarian Law. Case Study: Environmental and Economic Consequences of the 2006 Lebanon War*, 10

the failure to recognize animal rights and the lack of effective legal guarantees for their protection significantly impact communities affected by armed conflicts, perpetuating obstacles to achieving environmental justice and sustainable peace. Addressing this fundamental gap requires a serious reevaluation of environmental and legal models, particularly in countries facing conflicts and environmental challenges. Protecting animals and recognizing their rights must become an integral part of policies and legal frameworks to ensure a more ethical and sustainable coexistence.

Although both Padilla and Elias emphasize the importance of protecting animals, the concepts of animal welfare and animal rights are fundamentally different. Animal rights focus on the intrinsic value of living beings and assert that animals, as human beings possess fundamental rights, including the right to life, freedom, and protection from exploitation. This perspective often calls for the complete abolition of using animals for human benefit, including in agriculture, scientific experimentation, and entertainment. Advocates of animal rights, such as PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), believe that animals should not be treated as property or commodities and emphasize their moral and legal entitlements as sentient beings.¹⁷ In contrast, the animal welfare approach focuses on the well-being of animals within the framework of human use. This view seeks to reduce pain, suffering, and distress in animals while permitting their use in agriculture, research, and other industries. Animal welfare supporters emphasize humane treatment, appropriate housing, and adequate care to ensure that animals live in conditions that meet their physical and psychological needs. This approach is supported by organizations such as the American Humane Society, which work within existing legal frameworks to improve care standards.¹⁸ The key difference between these two approaches lies in their ultimate goals: Animal rights aim to end all forms of animal exploitation, while animal welfare seeks to improve the conditions under which animals are used. Philosophically, animal rights are rooted in deontological ethics, emphasizing moral principles and the intrinsic dignity of animals, whereas animal welfare often aligns with utilitarian ethics, balancing the benefits of animal use against the harm caused to them.¹⁹ Despite these differences, both movements share common ground in opposing unnecessary cruelty and advocating for bet-

CUADERNOS DE MARTE 173, 173-213 (2016), available at: <https://publicaciones.sociales.uba.ar/index.php/cuadernosdemarte/article/view/1824>

¹⁷ MICHAEL L. NELSON, ANIMAL RIGHTS AND WELFARE: A DOCUMENTARY AND REFERENCE GUIDE 175 (Greenwood, 2015); Gary E. Varner, The Prospects for Consensus and Convergence in the Animal Rights Debate, 24 HASTINGS CENTER REPORT 24, 24-28 (1994).

¹⁸ Javaid Aziz Awan & S. F. Rahim, *Animal Rights and Welfare in Islam*, 3 INTERNATIONAL J. OF AVIAN & WILDLIFE BIOLOGY 427, 427-430 (2018); MARC BEKOFF & MEANEY A. CARRON A., *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ANIMAL WELFARE* (Routledge, 2013).

¹⁹ L. Wayne Sumner, *Animal Welfare and Animal Rights*, 13 THE J. OF MEDICINE AND PHILOSOPHY 159, 159-175 (1988); Jessica Eisen, *Beyond Rights and Welfare: Democracy, Dialogue, and the Animal Welfare Act*, 51 U. MICH. J.L. REFORM 469 (2017).

ter treatment of animals. However, tensions arise when welfare measures are perceived as legitimizing the use of animals. Dialogue and cooperation between the perspectives of animal welfare and animal rights can promote mutual understanding and create a foundation for achieving their shared goal: reducing harm to animals. Such collaboration also allows for addressing the ethical and practical complexities inherent in human-animal relationships.²⁰

On September 23, 1977, in London, during a session of the “International League of Animal Rights,” the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights was adopted, and in 1978 it was recognized by UNESCO and the United Nations. This declaration asserts that all animals possess inherent rights and that disregarding these rights is a crime against nature and humanity itself.²¹ The recognition of the right to life for all species is considered the foundation of peaceful coexistence between human beings and animals. The preamble of the declaration states that respect for animals is tied to respect for human beings, and that education should, since childhood, foster affection, respect, and understanding toward animals. According to the declaration, all animals are entitled to equal rights to life and respect. Human beings must neither exploit nor destroy animals and are obligated to use their knowledge to protect them. Animals must receive care, protection, and freedom from mistreatment. In cases where killing animals is necessary, it must be done without pain or suffering. Wild animals have the right to live freely in their natural habitats and to reproduce; depriving them of this freedom—even for educational purposes—is a violation of their rights. Domesticated animals must also be raised under conditions appropriate to their species and without commercial coercion. Abandoning pets is considered an act of cruelty. Working animals must have limited workloads, proper nutrition, and adequate rest. Experiments that cause physical or psychological suffering to animals are deemed unacceptable and should be replaced with alternative methods. Overall, the declaration emphasizes animals’ right to life, respect, care, freedom, and natural living. It also states that farm animals must be treated with respect and without suffering throughout their lives and up to the point of slaughter. Regarding the exploitation of animals solely for human entertainment, it is clearly stated that no animal should be abused for human amusement, and shows or programs that exploit animals are incompatible with animal dignity. Any act leading to the unnecessary death of an animal is considered biocide—a crime against life. Similarly, acts resulting in the death of large numbers of wild animals are considered genocide—a crime against species. From this perspective, the United Nations believes that environmental pollution and destruction of natural habitats result in genocide. It is noteworthy that not only do living animals have rights, but dead animals must also be treated

²⁰ Robert H. Schmidt, *Why Do We Debate Animal Rights?*, 18 WILDLIFE SOCIETY BULL. 459, 459-461 (1990); Michael L. Nelson., *supra* note 17.

²¹ Jean-Marc Neumann, *The Universal Declaration of Animal Rights or the Creation of a New Equilibrium Between Species*, 19 ANIMAL L. REV. 91, 92, 96 (2012).

with respect. Likewise, the depiction of violent scenes against animals in cinema and television must be prohibited unless their purpose is to raise awareness and highlight the violation of animal rights.²²

International humanitarian law, which is a body of rules aimed at limiting the effects of war, contains provisions for the protection of the environment. For instance, the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and certain environmental treaties prohibit widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment during armed conflicts. However, these protections are primarily framed within the context of preserving the environment for human survival, and they rarely address the protection of animal rights as independent beings with intrinsic value. While humanitarian law indirectly protects the environment, it does not grant specific legal rights to animals that would shield them from pain and harm. This gap reflects a broader legal and ethical perspective that views animals mainly as property or resources, rather than as sentient beings worthy of independent consideration.²³

The argument surrounding the idea that animal welfare laws should impose legal duties on individuals to protect animals is based on a new perspective that views animals as stakeholders with rights deserving of protection.²⁴ This approach calls for significant changes in animal welfare laws, aiming to safeguard animals against external threats such as human cruelty, neglect, and damages caused by illegal activities. However, despite this evolving viewpoint, a clear lack of specific legal frameworks and codified rights for animals is evident in existing laws. This legal gap means that effective protection of animals is often limited, especially in areas affected by armed conflicts and wars. In these regions, animals face serious threats, including physical harm from violence, forced displacement, and the loss of their natural habitats. These issues not only directly endanger the well-being of animals but also negatively affect ecosystems and biodiversity. Ultimately, the lack of clear and enforceable laws to protect animals in crisis situations, especially during times of war and conflict, creates significant challenges and highlights the urgent need for reforms in both national and international policies to ensure the welfare and rights of animals during such crises.

Disruptions to ecosystems and the reduction of biodiversity can have significant consequences for animals, leading to imbalances that affect both the health of ecosystems and the stability of the food chain.²⁵ One of the key aspects is how the lack of specific legal protections for animals in conflict situations con-

²² *Id.*

²³ Michale J. Bowman, *The Protection of Animals Under International Law*, 4 CONNECTICUT J. INT'L L. 487 (1988).

²⁴ Alexia Fillol, *The Legal Status of Animals in Armed Conflicts*, 75 SPANISH J. INT'L. L. 291, 291–320 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.36151/REDI.75.2.11>

²⁵ Luis Fernández, *How Does the Environment Impact the Survival of Animal Species?*, CONICET (2017), <https://www.conicet.gov.ar/como-impacta-el-ambiente-en-la-supervivencia-de-especies-animales/>; ERIC CHIVIAN, BIODIVERSITY: ITS IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN HEALTH, CENTER FOR

tributes to increasing their vulnerability. The absence of “specific protections may exacerbate the suffering of animals and make it difficult to implement effective measures to protect them amidst the chaos of conflict”.²⁶

The restoration of natural habitats and the implementation of measures for the protection of animals can play a crucial role in building more resilient and sustainable communities after an armed conflict. In the post-conflict reconstruction process, it is essential not only to focus on habitat restoration but also to take specific actions for the protection and rehabilitation of wildlife that has been affected. This approach is seen as a key factor for reducing the ongoing suffering of animals and promoting the survival of ecosystems in a scene shaped by violence and instability.

However, Chocó (one of the most biodiverse regions of Colombia) has been severely affected by armed conflict. Illegal armed groups, including paramilitaries and guerrillas, have been active in the region. The presence of these groups has led to deforestation for illegal crops and mining operations, destroying the habitats of many wild species.²⁷ Domesticated animals belonging to local communities have often been stolen, killed, or abandoned, resulting in serious economic consequences for farmers and disrupting food supply chains. Additionally, illegal hunting for food or trading poses a significant threat to vulnerable species.²⁸ Furthermore, in the Meta region, armed conflict has caused widespread displacement of rural populations. As people flee violence, their domestic animals—such as cattle, chickens, and horses—are often left behind, leading to starvation, exposure, or predation. Moreover, the destruction of pastures and water sources due to military operations has diminished essential resources for both domestic and wild animals. Illegal hunting and the use of firearms have also contributed to increased animal mortality.²⁹

The authorities responsible for animal protection and welfare in Colombia are required to exercise thorough and strict supervision in this area. According to Article 307, the slaughter of animals for public consumption must only take place in slaughterhouses authorized by a competent authority. In addition to complying with the provisions of this law and its regulations, slaughter, killing, and transportation of animals must follow the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health. A significant step forward in this regard was the adoption of Law 84

HEALTH AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT, 6, 7, 17 (Harvard Medical School, 2002.) <https://www.chgeharvard.org/resource/biodiversity-its-importance-human-health> .

²⁶ MINISTERIO DE SALUD Y PROTECCIÓN SOCIAL, *supra* note 14.

²⁷ María D. Álvarez, *Forests in The Time of Violence: Conservation Implications of the Colombian war*, 16 J. OF SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY 47, 51, 53, 64 (2003).

²⁸ Nathalie Van Vliet, Björn Schulte-Herbruggen, Liliana Vanegas, Eric Yair Cuesta, François Sandrin & Robert Nasi, *What Role Do Wild Animals (Fish and Wildmeat) Play in the Food Security of Urban Teenagers Living in Poverty and Conflict—The Case of Quibdó, Colombia*, 7 ETHNOBIOLOGY AND CONSERVATION (2018).

²⁹ Jane M. Rausch, *Villavicencio, Colombia, 1940-2005: From Frontier Town to Frontier Metropolis*, 23 J. OF THIRD WORLD STUDIES 149 (2006).

of 1989,³⁰ which establishes the “National Statute of Animal Protection.” The provisions of this statute pursue the following objectives:

- a) The prevention and treatment of animal pain and suffering;
- b) The promotion of animal health and welfare by ensuring hygiene, health, and appropriate living conditions;
- c) The eradication and punishment of mistreatment and violent acts against animals;
- d) The development of educational programs through public media and official and private educational institutions to promote respect and care for animals;
- e) The formulation of effective measures for the conservation of wildlife species.

This law also outlines obligations for animal owners, caretakers, or keepers, including:

- a) Keeping the animal in an environment that allows for adequate movement, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, and hygiene;
- b) Providing sufficient and quality water and food, as well as the necessary medication and care to preserve the animal’s health and welfare and to prevent harm, illness, or death;
- c) Offering appropriate shelter against adverse weather conditions, when required by the species and climate.

Regarding the use of live animals in research and experimentation, it is stipulated that such activities are only permitted with prior authorization from the Ministry of Public Health and only when the action is scientifically necessary and unavoidable. It must also be demonstrated that:

- a) The experimental results cannot be obtained through any alternative method;
- b) The experiments are necessary for the control, prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of diseases affecting human beings or animals;
- c) The experiments cannot be replaced by cell culture, computer models, designs, films, photographs, videos, or other similar methods.³¹

Across Colombia, armed conflicts have not only inflicted immense suffering to people but also caused serious impacts on animal populations and eco-

³⁰ *Ley 84 de 1989: Estatuto Nacional de Protección de los Animales*. Diario Oficial No. 39.120, 27 de diciembre de 1989. At: https://www.camara.gov.co/sites/public_html/leyes_hasta_1991/ley/1989/ley_0084_1989.html

³¹ Javier González Cortés, *The Rights of Animals in Colombia: A Tangled Series of Discourses*, 48 REVISTA DE BIOÉTICA Y DERECHO 245, 75 (2020).

systems. Violence against animals has profound consequences for ecosystems and human communities. Animal abuse disrupts ecological balance, as suffering or loss of animal species can interfere with food chains and biodiversity, ultimately impacting vital ecosystem services such as pollination and water purification—services, which is essential for human survival.³² Moreover, there is well-documented evidence linking animal abuse to interpersonal violence, including domestic abuse and violent crime. Studies have shown that cruelty toward animals can normalize aggression within human communities.³³ Economically, violence against animals—particularly in industrial contexts such as slaughterhouses—can contribute to social disorder and elevated crime rates in surrounding areas, thereby placing additional strain on local economies and social structures.³⁴ Furthermore, witnessing or participating in violence against animals can lead to psychological desensitization to violence, perpetuating cycles of harm across the boundaries between human beings and other species.³⁵ Addressing animal violence is not only an ethical imperative but also a practical necessity for maintaining environmental integrity, social stability, and economic resilience. Collaboration between animal welfare professionals and human service providers, alongside restorative justice approaches, is essential for mitigating these interconnected harms and fostering a more compassionate coexistence.³⁶

In Nariño, armed groups compete for control over drug trafficking routes, leading to frequent violent clashes. Many rural residents have fled their homes due to the violence, abandoning their domestic animals, which often perish as a result. The economic collapse of farming communities has significantly reduced the capacity to care for animals. In addition, illegal hunting has increased as a means of survival for displaced individuals, placing intense pressure on local wildlife populations. Putumayo has been heavily affected by armed conflict, with multiple confrontations taking place between guerrilla groups, paramilitaries, and government forces. Both domestic and wild animals have suffered from

³² Brinda Jegatheesan, Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers, Elizabeth Ormerod & Paula Boyden, *Understanding the Link Between Animal Cruelty and Family Violence: The Bioecological Systems Model*, 17 INT'L. J. OF ENVIRONMENTAL RSCH. AND PUBLIC HEALTH 3116, 1 (2020).

³³ Christopher Hensley, Suzanne E. Tallichet & Erik L. Dutkiewicz, *Recurrent Childhood Animal Cruelty: Is there a Relationship to Adult Recurrent Interpersonal Violence?*, 34 CRIMINAL JUSTICE REV. 248 (2009).

Jessica Racine Jacques, *The slaughterhouse, social disorganization, and violent crime in rural communities*, 23 SOCIETY & ANIMALS 594 (2015).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Robert White, *Inter-Species Violence: Humans and the Harming of Animals*, AUSTRALIAN VIOLENCE: CRIME, CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEYOND 176 (J. Stubbs & S. Tomsen eds., 2016).

³⁶ Kelly Struthers Montford, Darren Chang & Selingul Yalcin, *Anti-Carceral Approaches to Addressing Harms Against Animals: Considerations on Multispecies Restorative and Transformative Justice*, LAW & SOCIAL INQUIRY 1-28, 284, 305-306 (2024); See also Vincent Aviva, Shelby McDonald, Bethanie Poe & Vicki Deisner, *The Link Between Interpersonal Violence and Animal Abuse*, 3 SOCIETY REGISTER, 83-101 (2019).

habitat destruction, direct violence, and neglect. Livestock have been killed or confiscated, and the expansion of illegal crops has led to the destruction of forests that are critical for wildlife survival. These factors have contributed to declining animal populations and the destabilization of local ecosystems.³⁷

Armed conflicts have profound and multifaceted impacts on wildlife, primarily through habitat destruction and increased illegal hunting. Military operations often lead to the devastation of natural habitats, resulting in species displacement and ecosystem disruption, depriving animals of essential resources for survival. For example, in areas of high biodiversity, conflicts have been linked to significant declines in wildlife populations due to habitat loss and ecosystem fragmentation.³⁸ Moreover, armed conflicts create conditions that facilitate illegal hunting and wildlife trafficking. The breakdown of governmental structures and law enforcement during wars allows poachers to exploit wildlife and supply black markets with ivory, bushmeat, and other animal products. This illicit trade not only accelerates loss of biodiversity but also undermines global conservation efforts.³⁹ Additionally, the proliferation of weapons and militarization of landscapes during conflict exacerbates wildlife hunting, as seen in Cambodia, where armed conflicts led to a drastic reduction in both the abundance and diversity of species.⁴⁰ The combined effects of these actions are far-reaching, as the loss of biodiversity not only impacts the animals themselves but also undermines the overall health of ecosystems, human livelihoods, and the planet's ability to sustain life. These consequences underscore the urgent need for immediate and coordinated action to address the interconnected crises of violence, loss of biodiversity, and ecological disruption.

The situation of animals abandoned by displaced families in Colombia is a complex issue intricately tied to the country's prolonged armed conflict, which has led to the displacement of millions. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are often forced to flee rural areas quickly, leaving behind livestock and pets due to the urgency of the circumstances. Studies indicate that around 92% of displaced families who owned livestock were compelled to abandon them, contributing to widespread neglect and abandonment of animals in conflict-affected

³⁷ Editorial, *New People Displaced by the Armed Conflict in the Nariño Department* (2009), MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES, October 26, 2009. https://www.msf.org/new-people-displaced-armed-conflict-nari%C3%B1o-department-colombia?utm_source=; Claudia Amaya-Castellanos, Edna M. Gamboa-Delgado, Etelvina Santacruz-Chasoy & Blanca Pelcastre-Villafuerte, *Loss of ancestral food practices and perception of its effect on children's health among Inga indigenous grandmothers, Nariño, Colombia*, 22 BMC PUBLIC HEALTH 1, 1452, 3 (2022).

³⁸ Kaitlyn M. Gaynor, Kathryn J. Fiorella, Gregory Gillian H., David J. Kurz, Katherine L. Seto, Lauren S. Withey & Justin S. Brashares, *War and Wildlife: Linking Armed Conflict to Conservation*, 14 FRONTIERS IN ECOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT 533, 533-534 (2016).

³⁹ Timothy Kuiper et al., *Drivers and Facilitators of the Illegal Killing of Elephants Across 64 African Sites*, B 290 PROC. ROYAL SOC'Y, 1, 1-2, (2023).

⁴⁰ Colby Loucks et al. *Wildlife Decline in Cambodia, 1953–2005: Exploring the Legacy of Armed Conflict*, 2 CONSERVATION LETTERS 82, (2009).

regions.⁴¹ Moreover, displaced families face severe socio-economic hardships, which often persist even after resettlement and further limit their ability to care for animals.⁴² The phenomenon of animal abandonment also reflects broader societal issues, such as the consumerist preference for purebred animals and the disregard for native or stray animals, exacerbating the plight of homeless and stray animals.⁴³ According to a report by Human Rights Watch,⁴⁴ during the 1997 massacre in the region of El Salado, paramilitary forces drove residents to flee, forcing many of them to leave behind their belongings and animals. Similarly, a 2014 report by Al Jazeera recounted the experience of Alirio Alfonso Guerrero, who was displaced from his farm due to paramilitary threats and had to leave behind his land and 200 animals.⁴⁵

The loss of these animals not only has significant economic impacts on displaced families but also directly affects the health and well-being of these sentient beings. Animals abandoned due to the displacement of their owners become vulnerable to hunger, disease, predators, and harsh environmental conditions, which severely threaten their lives and survival.⁴⁶ These creatures, recognized as sentient beings, are impacted not only biologically but also emotionally by such sudden and drastic changes. However, recent years have seen some initial progress in the realm of animal rights, reflecting positive shifts in the justice system's approach. These changes lean toward the ethical and legal recognition of animals as sentient beings, emphasizing the need to protect their rights and address their well-being. Such measures indicate a growing acknowledgment that animals are not merely economic resources but living beings with inherent needs and moral value, deserving consideration within the framework of relevant policies and laws.

In Colombia, there are significant limitations in the mechanisms for administering justice to request support and advocate for interests of animal welfare. The growing awareness about animal rights highlights the need to overcome these legal limitations and ensure effective representation in courts to address the violence that animals have endured during conflicts. This also underscores the importance of incorporating legal measures into Colombian legislation that

⁴¹ Diana Esther Guzmán-Rodríguez, *Dignity Takings and Dignity Restoration: A Case study of the Colombian Land Restitution Program*, 92 KENTUCKY L. REV. 871, 871-872 (2017).

⁴² Sonia Díaz Monsalve et al., *Mental Health Among Displaced and Non-displaced Populations in Valledupar, Colombia: Do Inequalities Continue?*, 116 PATHOGENS AND GLOBAL HEALTH 305, 305 (2022).

⁴³ Gonzalo Luna-Cortés, *The Influence of Materialism on Purebred Dogs' Welfare Among Two Different Generations in Colombia (South America)*, 22 J. APPLIED ANIMAL WELFARE SCI., at 149 (2019).

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Colombian Internally Displaced Woman* (Dec. 11, 1997), https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/colombia/Colom989-07.htm?utm_source=

⁴⁵ Chris Arsenault, *Colombia: Refugees in their own country* (May 18, 2014), https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2014/5/18/colombia-refugees-in-their-own-country?utm_source=

⁴⁶ García-Jiménez, Carlos Ignacio, and Yalma L. Vargas-Rodríguez, "Passive Government, Organized Crime, and Massive Deforestation: The Case of Western Mexico", CONSERVATION SCIENCE AND PRACTICE 3, no. e562 (2021): 1-6.

not only recognizes the rights of animals but also establishes ways for effective protection and accountability in cases of violence against them.

IV. Irreparable Damages of Armed Conflicts on Green Areas in Colombia

During the pandemic years, Colombia's Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, and Environmental Studies (IDEAM) reported that 171,685 hectares of forest—mostly in the Amazon region—were destroyed, representing an increase of more than 8% compared to 2019. Through land grabbing, economic actors often establish so-called “high-value agricultural activities”, such as cattle ranching and the cultivation of African oil palm. This phenomenon has deep historical roots: Even before the signing of the peace agreement, extractive projects had already been benefiting from land grabbing dynamics and the rural development model. Meanwhile, the government effectively legitimized these land seizures by supporting and backing companies that had illegally taken over public lands (*baldíos*).⁴⁷

Throughout history, the intensification of conflicts has been strongly influenced by land, crops, and natural resources. The competition between illegal groups and organized crime for control of resources has emerged as one of the most significant drivers of deforestation in the country. While not all activities related to this competition are illegal, the exploitation of natural resources often occurs in a manner that disregards environmental preservation. Armed groups and illicit organizations have been known to clear forests for agricultural expansion, mining, and drug production, all of which contribute to ecosystem degradation.⁴⁸ Additionally, the lack of effective enforcement of environmental laws exacerbates the situation, allowing these activities to continue unchecked and undermining the country's environmental sustainability. These conflicts not only disrupt the balance of local ecosystems but also have long-lasting social and economic consequences for the communities living in those regions.⁴⁹ An interview conducted by the International Crisis Group highlights this crisis:

Official statistics for the period from 2015 to 2020 show that deforestation is primarily driven by factors such as the expansion of livestock farming,

⁴⁷ Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology And Environmental Studies (IDEAM), *Early Deforestation Detection Bulletin (DT-D)* (Subdirectorato of Ecosystems and Environmental Information, Forest and Carbon Monitoring System (SMBYC)), <http://documentacion.ideam.gov.co/openbiblio/bvirtual/023891/22BOLETIN.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Carlos Ignacio García-Jiménez & Yalma L. Vargas-Rodríguez, *Passive Government, Organized Crime, and Massive Deforestation: The Case of Western Mexico*, 3 CONSERVATION SCI. AND PRACTICE e562, 1-2, 6 (2021).

⁴⁹ Hakeem Ijaiya & Joseph O. T., *Rethinking Environmental Law Enforcement in Nigeria*, 5 BEIJING L. REV. 306, 306, 307-308 (2014).

unplanned infrastructure development, illegal coca cultivation, mining—particularly illegal mining—large-scale agriculture, land grabbing, which includes forcing farmers to sell their properties at low prices or seizing them after displacement through violence, and the exploitation of forests.⁵⁰

Land control has played a central role in the dynamics of the conflict in Colombia. Between 1996 and 2006, during the peak of paramilitary violence in Colombia, over 3,100 people were killed and 55,000 farmers were displaced. These displacements led to a decline in land values and the cheap acquisition of land by mining companies. One paramilitary fighter admitted in court that the main motivation behind this violence was the seizure of coal-rich lands.⁵¹ Following these displacements and fraudulent transactions, companies such as Drummond, Cerrejón (represented by Glencore), and Carbones del Cerrejón obtained extraction licenses for lands that victims have identified as illegally seized properties. These lands are primarily located in the Cesar province and coincide with paramilitary activities. Despite the official disbandment of paramilitary groups in 2006, threats against victims and social activists persist.⁵² After the enactment of the Victims and Land Restitution Law in 2011, neo-paramilitary groups have used intimidation and coercion to prevent displaced people from returning. Similar patterns are observed in lands that previously belonged to Afro-descendant communities or small farmers and are now controlled by large agribusiness and livestock companies. For example, the Afro-Colombian communities of Curvaradó and Jiguamiandó in El Carmen del Darién lost over 3,500⁵³ residents within three days during joint military and paramilitary operations.⁵⁴ Upon their return, they faced illegal land seizures by logging and oil palm companies. Although the first chapter of the Colombian peace agreement calls for rural reforms aimed at addressing land ownership inequalities, the transitional justice framework that followed does not challenge

⁵⁰ INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, *BROKEN CANOPY: DEFORESTATION AND CONFLICT IN COLOMBIA* (CRISIS GROUP, 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/es/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/091-broken-canopy-deforestation-and-conflict-colombia>.

⁵¹ Auxiliary Court to the Fifth Specialized Criminal Court of the Medellín Circuit, 2013 in *CLEAR ACCOUNTS: THE ROLE OF THE TRUTH COMMISSION IN UNVEILING CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COLOMBIAN ARMED CONFLICT* (Nelson Camilo Sánchez eds., 2018), <https://www.dejusticia.org/publication/cuentas-claras-empresas/>.

⁵² *The Damned Land: Guerrilla, Paramilitaries, Mining Companies, and Armed Conflict in the Department of Cesar*, (CNMH, Aug. 2016), <https://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2016/malditatierra/la-maldita-tierra.pdf>.

⁵³ *Case of the Displaced Afro-descendant Communities of the Cacarica River Basin (Operation Genesis) v. Colombia*, Judgement, Inter-am. Ct. H. R. (ser. C), No. 270, Nov. 20 2013, 46, https://www.cor-teidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_270_esp.pdf.

⁵⁴ *Cacarica: 23 Years Building Peace*, (COMMISSION FOR THE CLARIFICATION OF TRUTH, COEXISTENCE, AND NON-REPETITION, Mar. 13, 2020), <https://comisiondelaverdad.co/actualidad/noticias/cacarica-23-anos-construyendo-paz>.

the economic dominance of corporations. The law continues to serve corporate interests and falls short in protecting the rights of small farmers.⁵⁵

The exploitation of nature, both past and present, has been a fundamental cause of harm and displacement for human beings and non-human animals alike. One might imagine that animals in Colombia's forests during the decades-long conflict lived peacefully in areas beyond the reach of law and inaccessible to extractive companies. However, such an image is deeply utopian. Over nearly fifty years of internal conflict, the Revolutionary Colombian Armed Forces (FARC-EP) maintained a strong human presence in the forests, displacing animals from their habitats, fighting against them, often consuming them, instilling fear, and even using them as instruments of war. War in Colombia claimed the lives of many human beings and animals alike. FARC-EP hunted animals for food and sometimes used them to attack their enemies. Their hunting mastery of wild animals ensured their survival and superiority over human beings untrained in these skills. Initially, their relationship with animals was politically motivated. Before their project became heavily intertwined with the drug trafficking economy, FARC-EP viewed animals as a means to support rural livelihoods and family independence.⁵⁶ However, as Crespo⁵⁷ analyzes, many questions remain unanswered: How many animal species were displaced from their habitats? How many animals were killed in bombings or by landmines? How many of them were used as live shooting targets to desensitize combatants to death and torture? FARC-EP's use of animals as bombs was also well-known: "Animals, bicycles, and corpses were turned into bombs. Horses, donkeys, ambulances, artillery, and even children's bodies were transformed into explosive devices".⁵⁸

This process not only reinforced land distribution inequality but also caused many families to run away from their homes.⁵⁹ With the implementation of the peace agreement signed in 2016 with FARC, many areas, which were previ-

⁵⁵ OFICINA DEL ALTO COMISIONADO PARA LA PAZ, FINAL AGREEMENT TO END THE ARMED CONFLICT AND BUILD A STABLE AND LASTING PEACE, (Nov. 24, 2016), [<https://perma.cc/LF8X-ZR8N>] [hereinafter FINAL AGREEMENT]; Isabella Ariza Buitrago & Luisa Gómez Betancur, *The Shortcomings of Corporate Accountability in Post-Conflict Colombia: Land, Rivers and Animals* CONFERENCE: THE SOCIAL PRACTICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (2021).

⁵⁶ This conception of land ownership and animals rearises in the Peace Agreement of 2016: the only direct allusion to animals in the Agreement is in regard to them being provided to families that used to cultivate illegal crops. Animals as victims of war are left out of the Agreement. As property, FARC-EP demanded their more equal distribution between owners and the campesinos who worked the land; Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Betancur, *supra* note 55 at 13.

⁵⁷ Carlos A. Crespo, *Territories of Peace for Animals and the Environment*, EL TURBIÓN, (June 2, 2016), [<https://elturbion.com/13421>].

⁵⁸ Guerrillas exploded corpses, houses, animals, and cars to attack and contain their enemy, the national army; See NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORICAL MEMORY, *Chapter IV: The Impacts and Damages Caused by the Armed Conflict in Colombia*, in INFORME GENERAL, (Aguilar ed., 2014) centrode-memorialhistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2013/bastaYa/capitulos/basta-ya-cap4_258-327.pdf.

⁵⁹ OXFAM, *DIVIDE AND PURCHASE: A NEW WAY OF CONCENTRATING PUBLIC LANDS IN CO-*

ously under the control of this group, were liberated from the restrictions that FARC had placed on deforestation.

These restrictions were tied to the use of dense forests as shelters for guerrilla camps and areas of their presence.⁶⁰ Consequently, these regions became hotspots for intense conflict and were exposed to the influence of a new generation of armed groups. These groups, driven by private interests, promoted the agendas of large corporations, ranchers, and landowners. Moreover, they were often linked to various forms of corruption, which further exacerbated the instability and violence in these areas.⁶¹ As a result, forests, once protected by the constraints imposed by FARC, became contested spaces, where fighting for control over resources was intensified. The power vacuum left after the FARC's retreat allowed for the proliferation of these groups, which took advantage of the weakened state presence to advance their own economic goals.⁶²

Paramilitary groups move into areas ahead of major mining, energy, industrial farming, and infrastructure projects. Their presence drives forced displacement or coerced land sales and encourages land speculation. With the disarmament and reintegration of former FARC combatants into civilian life, killings of local leaders, forced or voluntary displacements may decrease, allowing new economic projects to face fewer obstacles. However, in other countries such as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola, environmental heritage destruction has followed post-conflict periods.⁶³ The final peace agreement begins with a commitment to sustainability and environmental protection: "Given that Colombia's new vision for peace seeks to achieve a sustainable society, united in diversity, based on respect for human rights, mutual tolerance, environmental protection, respect for nature, renewable and non-renewable resources, and its biodiversity".⁶⁴ Environmental references in the agreement include: Access and use of non-productive lands, formalization of land ownership, agricultural frontier boundaries, and protection of reserve areas. It stipulates the "closure of agricultural frontiers and protection of reserve areas" with the aim to delineate agricultural boundaries, safeguard ecologically significant areas, and create balanced options for populations living adjacent to

LOMBIA (2013), https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/rr-divide-and-purchase-land-concentration-colombia-211013-es_0.pdf.

⁶⁰ INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, *supra* note 50.

⁶¹ E. Molina, G. Chaparro & O. Guzmán, *Impacts of the Colombian Armed Conflict on the Environment and Actions for Effective Reparations*, 20 REV. CIENTÍFICA GENERAL JOSÉ MARÍA CORDOVA, at 1087 (2022), <https://revistacientificaesmic.com/index.php/esmic/article/view/1129/904>.

⁶² Paulo J. Murillo-Sandoval et al., *The End of Gunpoint Conservation: Forest Disturbance After the Colombian Peace Agreement*, 15 ENVIRONMENTAL RSCH. LETTERS 034033 (2020).

⁶³ Fabrizio Hochschild, *The Environmental Paradox of the Peace Agreement*, (EL ESPECTADOR, 2015) <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/paz/paradoja-ambiental-del-acuerdo-de-paz-articulo-539073>.

⁶⁴ FINAL AGREEMENT, *supra* note 55; Unidad de Investigación y Acusación. *El ambiente como víctima silenciosa: Un diagnóstico de las afectaciones en el posacuerdo de paz (2017–2022)*. (Unidad de Investigación y Acusación, 2022).

or within these zones —balancing environmental preservation with well-being and quality of life. This is to be implemented by the national government under principles of rural community participation and sustainable development, including the preparation of an environmental zoning plan within two years.⁶⁵ Environmental safeguards related to the substitution of illicit crops are also addressed. Beyond these points, there is no mention of the current government's economic drivers. It seems paradoxical that the president who achieved the greatest progress in negotiations with guerrillas, simultaneously promotes the strengthening of extractive economies, the construction of roads, ports, and other commercial infrastructure, and the attraction of foreign investment across all sectors. Yet, this is less paradoxical when understood in the context of the need to expand capital and markets in countries with high potential for raw material supply and large consumer populations. Indeed, “mining and energy extraction were not included in the peace agreements, and senior government officials presented them as a source of financing for the post-conflict era”.⁶⁶ From the outset, government negotiators declared that the country's “development model” was not open for discussion. Within this framework, social-environmental conflicts are expected to increase as areas and territories formerly affected by armed conflict and previously overlooked by mining and energy companies are now targeted. However, it is not only mining and development projects that may generate social-environmental conflicts. The reintegration of former combatants into civilian life in areas near or within ethnic group territories —such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities— may also cause problems. These communities, with their distinct relationships to the environment and resources, must accommodate new populations whose views do not necessarily align with their own.

Finally, the costs are not only environmental: “80 percent of human rights violations and 87 percent of all forced displacements occur in municipalities with mining and energy projects. Ninety percent of violations against indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations take place in areas where traditional agriculture and fishing have been displaced by gold and oil extraction”.⁶⁷ Therefore, opening new national territories for exploitation and use under the current National Development Plan's economic drivers and the ongoing consolidation of mining and energy projects, means that peace will only relate to the potential removal of an illegal armed actor. The root causes of violence—greed for economic profit and the inequalities arising from it—will remain unaddressed.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ FINAL AGREEMENT, *supra* note 55, at 19-20.

⁶⁶ Rafael Colmenares Faccini, *In Colombia, Does the Mining Locomotive Lead to Peace?* (ELDIARIO, ES, 2016) <http://www.eldiario.es/ultima-llamada/Colombia-locomotora-minera-conduce-paz>

⁶⁷ Alma De Walsché, *The Competition for Natural Resources Threatens the Peace Agreement in Colombia*, (MO, 2016) <http://www.mo.be/es/lisis/la-competencia-por-los-recursos-naturales-amenaza-el-acuerdode-paz-en-colombia>.

⁶⁸ Claudia Patricia Puerta Silva & Robert Dover, *Salud, recursos naturales y el proceso de paz en Colombia* 22 J. LATIN AM. & CARIBBEAN ANTHROPOLOGY 183, 184-186 (2017).

Armed conflicts play a significant role in habitat destruction and pose severe threats to wildlife conservation and biodiversity. During conflicts, ecosystems often suffer as collateral damage. This damage can result from direct effects such as bombings, deforestation, and chemical pollution, as well as indirect effects like the collapse of governance systems and protective policies.⁶⁹ Over 90% of armed conflicts between 1950 and 2000 occurred in biodiversity hotspots, many of which have been repeatedly affected by violence, leading to the degradation of critical habitats.⁷⁰ The socio-political instability caused by war, often leads to overexploitation of wildlife and vegetation, placing additional pressure on ecosystems and local communities dependent on these resources.⁷¹ Preservation efforts, during and after conflicts, face challenges such as institutional weakness, illegal wildlife trade, and human displacement, which disrupt ecological balance and hinder recovery and restoration.⁷²

The exploitation of natural resources is closely linked to various forms of violence, including armed conflicts, sexual violence, and social unrest. Armed conflicts often occur in regions rich in natural resources, as competition over control and profits from resources such as oil, diamonds, and precious stones can motivate rebel groups to prolong wars or resist government forces.⁷³ Additionally, sexual violence perpetrated by rebel groups may be influenced by their resource exploitation strategies. For example, groups that rely on extortion tend to need less local support and are more likely to engage in such violence, whereas trafficking-based groups require broader cooperation, reducing the likelihood of sexual violence.⁷⁴ Moreover, resource-related conflicts often intersect with ethnic and social grievances, especially in areas where resource extraction exacerbates inequalities or fuels separatist movements.⁷⁵ Environmental degradation and scarcity resulting from overexploitation also intensify local conflicts over land, water, and other essential resources, thereby contributing to instability.⁷⁶ These situations show the complex connection between natural resource

⁶⁹ Kaitlyn M. Gaynor, *supra* note 38 at 533-535; Thor Hanson, *Biodiversity conservation and armed conflict: a warfare ecology perspective*, 1429 ANNALS NEW YORK ACAD. SCI. 50 (2018).

⁷⁰ Hanson, *supra* note 69.

⁷¹ Joseph P. Dudley, Joshua R. Ginsberg, Andrew J. Plumptre, John A. Hart & Liliana C. Campos, *Effects of War and Civil Strife on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats* 16 CONSERVATION BIOLOGY 319, 319-320 (2002).

⁷² Colby Loucks, *supra* note 40 at 82-83.

⁷³ Macartan Humphreys, *Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution: Uncovering the Mechanisms*, 49 J. CONFLICT RESOLUTION 508, 509-511 (2005); Päivi Lujala, *The Spoils of Nature: Armed civil conflict and rebel access to natural resources*, 47 J. PEACE & RES. 15-28 (2010).

⁷⁴ Beth Elise Whitaker, James Igoe Walsh & Justin Conrad, *Natural Resource Exploitation and Sexual Violence by Rebel Groups*, 81 J. POLITICS 702, 702-704 (2019).

⁷⁵ Edward Aspinall, *The Construction of Grievance*, 51 J. CONFLICT RESOLUTION 950, 950-972 (2007); Tim C. Wegenast & Matthias Basedau, *Ethnic Fractionalization, Natural Resources and Armed Conflict*, 31 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT & PEACE SCI. 432, 432-457 (2014).

⁷⁶ Esther, D. K., *Land Resource Conflicts and Its Link to Cattle Rustling Along the Borders of Baringo County, Kenya: Causes, Effects and Possible Remedies*, 7 INT'L J. HUMANITIES & SOC. STUDIES 11 (2019).

use and violence, highlighting the need for sustainable and fair management of resources to prevent conflicts.

In response to the new reality in which biodiversity is viewed as a war victim, several proposals have emerged, emphasizing the need to address the suffering and damage inflicted on biodiversity within the context of conflict. The dominant economic perspective has been questioned, and in its place, a more integrated and systemic approach has been suggested to understand the relationship between human beings and non-human entities. This new approach stresses the importance of recognizing violence against natural elements as one of the underlying causes of war, calling for a process where the suffering of non-human entities is reconsidered. Moreover, it advocates for an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses a comprehensive and empathetic understanding of these issues, promoting a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness between human actions and the broader ecological impacts. Such a shift in perspective aims to foster more humane and sustainable solutions to the environmental destruction caused by armed conflicts, urging societies to think their approach to both nature and warfare over.⁷⁷

The economic losses resulting from biodiversity destruction are also significant. According to the report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), ecosystem degradation costs the global economy up to \$25 trillion annually. The World Bank has warned that low-income countries could lose about 10 percent of their GDP by 2030 due to the collapse of ecosystem services.⁷⁸ In response to this crisis, a trend has emerged that seeks to assign financial value to biodiversity. Financial institutions and governments are investing in environmental conservation projects, with billions of dollars attracted to this sector so far.⁷⁹ However, this monetization of nature presents challenges. When ecosystems are assigned a price tag, there is a risk that the protection of species deemed as “economically unviable” will be overlooked. This approach is a form of reductionism which brings nature down merely to a source of economic profit.⁸⁰ Moreover, developed countries that have committed to supporting global biodiversity restoration have in practice fallen short of their commitments. According to a report by the British Overseas Development Institute, countries such as the United Kingdom, Can-

⁷⁷ Alejandro Castillejo, *Recalibrar la Escucha: ¿De los árboles como sujetos del dolor?*, 19 (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición-CEV, Documento de trabajo, 2023).

⁷⁸ Jessica Rawnsley, *Investment Sector Seeks to Put a Value on Biodiversity*, (FINANCIAL TIMES, Dec. 9, 2024) https://www.ft.com/content/4db45de5-1458-4f89-a124-7f722c177158?utm_source=; Financial Times, *Biodiversity hit to economies estimated at up to \$25tn a year in landmark report*, at https://www.ft.com/content/fed37e59-1f36-453a-a9b1-70f94c8b24f9?utm_source=; World Bank, *Biodiversity*, en https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/biodiversity?utm_source=.

⁷⁹ Rawnsley, *supra* note 78.

⁸⁰ Barbara Unmüßig, *Monetizing Nature: Taking Precaution on a Slippery Slope*, (Great Transition Network, August, 2014). <https://greattransition.org/publication/monetizing-nature-taking-precaution-on-a-slippery-slope>

ada, and Italy have contributed significantly less than their fair share to financing conservation efforts.⁸¹ This kind of thinking leads us to the conclusion that “nature” must be codified, reduced to a mere research subject or resource to be exploited.⁸² Such an approach undermines the true complexity of the issue, ignoring the intrinsic value of ecosystems and species beyond economic calculations. This highlights the urgent need for an interdisciplinary framework that can explore the intricate relationships between nature, conflict, and human impact in a more nuanced and thoughtful way.⁸³ Addressing environmental degradation, therefore, requires more than just a technical or economic perspective. It demands a holistic, collaborative approach that can engage with the ethical, ecological, and social dimensions of the problem.⁸⁴ The complexity of environmental pollution and destruction, particularly in the context of armed conflict, calls for a solution that acknowledges and integrates all these factors, creating space for deeper inquiry and more comprehensive solutions that prioritize both human and ecological well-being.⁸⁵

On the other hand, it is crucial to recognize that the strategies implemented by the government to combat armed groups have not always been the most effective. A clear example of this can be seen in the approach used to fight drug trafficking, where the preferred method has been aerial spraying with glyphosate. The Colombian government mainly used a strong herbicide called glyphosate to destroy coca plantations, which are the plants used to make cocaine. This operation was carried out through aerial spraying and was part of a larger program supported by the United States known as Plan Colombia. In this method, glyphosate was sprayed over vast areas of forests, agricultural lands, and water sources.⁸⁶ However, the use of this chemical has raised serious environmental and health concerns. Environmentally, glyphosate has caused the destruction of non-target vegetation, contamination of water resources, and damage to Colombia’s highly rich ecosystems. Chemical residues have entered

⁸¹ Phoebe Weston, Editorial, *UK among rich countries not paying fair share to restore nature-report*, (THE GUARDIAN, June 20, 2024) https://www.theguardian.com/environment/article/2024/jun/20/uk-among-rich-countries-not-paying-fair-share-to-restore-nature-report-aoe?utm_source=; Phoebe Weston, *The world needs \$700bn a year to restore nature. But where is the money coming from?*, THE GUARDIAN, (Oct. 30, 2024) https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/30/the-world-needs-700bn-a-year-to-restore-nature-but-where-is-the-money-coming-from?utm_source=.

⁸² Jacobo Grajales, *State Involvement, Land Grabbing and Counter-insurgency in Colombia*, 44 DEV. & CHANGE, at 211 (2013).

⁸³ Petri Tapio & Willamo Risto, *Developing Interdisciplinary Environmental Frameworks*, AMBIO, 125, 125-133 (2008).

⁸⁴ Harry Wells et al., *Equity in Ecosystem Restoration*, 29 RESTORATION ECOLOGY, e13385 (2021).

⁸⁵ Iryna Kyrpychova et al., *Identifying the Risks of Armed Conflict Impact on the Ecosystem* (EASTERN-EUROPEAN J. ENTERPRISE TECHNOLOGIES, 2024).

⁸⁶ Miranda Fox, *Colombia Has Suspended Aerial Herbicide Spraying on Illegal Coca and Poppy plantations*, EARTHJUSTICE, (June 16, 2025), https://earthjustice.org/article/colombia-suspends-aerial-spraying-of-illegal-coca-crops?utm_source=.

groundwater and aquifers, posing long-term risks to biodiversity and ecosystem health. On the other hand, studies have shown that glyphosate is also harmful to human health. Local people —especially children, pregnant women, and the elderly— have experienced skin, breathing, and digestive issues.⁸⁷ Such methods highlight the need for more thoughtful and ecologically sensitive strategies that do not prioritize short-term gains over the long-term health of both human and environmental systems. The ongoing environmental damage caused by these practices demonstrates the importance of finding alternative, sustainable solutions that address the root causes of conflict and drug trafficking without further harming the natural world.⁸⁸

Some experts have recently described these types of actions as “ecocide” or “environmental destruction”, as they represent lethal forces capable of harming both human and non-human life.⁸⁹ Many studies have shown that glyphosate has toxic effects on animal health, causing behavioral problems, reproductive issues, and indirect harm through environmental pollution. For example, glyphosate has been linked to alterations in microbial communities, which can increase animals’ susceptibility to diseases, such as toxic bacterial infections in birds and mammals.⁹⁰ Moreover, glyphosate’s toxic effects on the nervous system and its disruption of hormones have raised concerns about its long-term harm to wildlife and ecosystems.⁹¹ One of the main challenges faced by animals is biocide or ecocide, a concept that encompasses any actions leading to the death of an animal without adequate justification. This can include overhunting and overfishing, scientific testing on animals, exploitation in the food industry, and abuse or abandonment of domestic animals.⁹² It is important to note that animals are not mere objects or things; they are beings capable of feeling pain and experiencing emotions.

The government’s unfavorable approach extends beyond the previously mentioned issues. One of the most controversial news stories that emerged from

⁸⁷ Center for International Environmental Law, *Aerial Fumigations in Colombia’s Drug War* (February 2017), https://www.ciel.org/project-update/aerial-fumigations-in-colombias-drug-war/?utm_source=.

⁸⁸ INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, *supra* note 50.

⁸⁹ Ángela Schembri Peña, *Ecocidio: ¿nuevo crimen internacional? - Derecho del Medio Ambiente* (Universidad Externado de Colombia, Departamento de Derecho del Medio Ambiente, June 24, 2021), <https://medioambiente.uxternado.edu.co/ecocidio-nuevo-crimen-internacional/>.

⁹⁰ Ariana Van Bruggen et al., *Indirect Effects of the Herbicide Glyphosate on Plant, Animal and Human Health Through Its Effects on Microbial Communities*, 9 FRONTIERS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCI., 763917, 1-3 (2021).

⁹¹ Zoe Kissane & Jill M. Shephard, *The Rise of Glyphosate and New Opportunities for Biosentinel Early-warning Studies*, 31 CONSERVATION BIOLOGY 1293, 1293-1300 (2017); Becky Talyn, Kelly Muller, Cindy Mercado, Bryan González & Katherine Bartels, *The Herbicide Glyphosate and Its Formulations Impact Animal Behavior Across Taxa*, 2 AGROCHEMICALS 367, 367-408 (2023).

⁹² Carolina Gamboa, *Biocidio. Todo acto que entrañe la muerte de un animal, es decir, un crimen contra la vida* (B.A. thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2021), <https://repository.javeriana.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10554/4602/tesis312.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Colombia —and received worldwide attention— was the pursuit, shooting, and eventual public display of a dead African hippopotamus in the country's forests.⁹³ This operation was carried out with the involvement of a battalion from the National Army and with prior approval from the Ministry of Environment.⁹⁴ Regarding wildlife hunting, Colombia is governed by the Natural Resources Law, which provides the overall framework for the management, protection, exploitation, and trade of wildlife. Additionally, Decree 1608 of 1978, which regulates this law specifically in the area of wildlife, and the National Animal Protection Regulations are among the relevant legal documents. Among the types of legal hunting in Colombia are the following:

- Subsistence hunting: This requires no permit and is carried out to meet basic human needs.
- Scientific hunting: Permitted solely for research or study purposes within the country. Although the number of such hunts is reportedly insignificant, collectors and traffickers often exploit this type of permit.
- Supportive or breeding hunting: Conducted to establish animal breeding centers or special hunting zones. A permit is mandatory for this type of hunting; however, because it requires a continuous supply of animal specimens, it can have very negative consequences for species.
- Control hunting: Done to regulate the population of a species when necessary.

On another note, Colombia has not yet joined the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to contribute to efforts aimed at banning whale hunting, despite the significant benefits whales bring to the tourism industry. These marine mammals face two other threats that may be even more dangerous: on one hand, the lack of a firm stance by the IWC —led by Japan— against banning whale hunting; and on the other, the inefficiency of the Colombian government, which has delayed its accession to the commission for months, even though such a move could have signaled its opposition to whale killing to the world. Although commercial whaling was globally banned in 1986 due to the risk of extinction of 13 recognized species, the Japanese government claims that whale hunting in the country is conducted solely for scientific research. How-

⁹³ In its July 10, 2009 edition, the *Los Angeles Times* opened its international section with: “The Colombian government’s order to kill the hippopotamus that once belonged to Pablo Escobar has sparked a wave of protests among animal rights activists.” The *Telegraph* of Britain reported: “Following the death of the first animal, the search continues for two others that were also part of the exotic collection the cocaine baron amassed during his millionaire days”. *Le Monde* of France stated: “The hunt for Pablo Escobar’s hippopotamuses remains open”.

⁹⁴ One of the scientists who brought the animal from Kenya noted that his first contact with the hippopotamus was directly in its natural environment, in Africa, around the river inlet, in a natural grassland with sparse forest, where it lived with the herd. See Gonzalo Palomino Ortiz, *Los “falsos positivos” ambientales* (OBSERVATORIO AMBIENTAL DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DEL TOLIMA, July 14 2009).

ever, according to Milko Schwartzman, an activist from Greenpeace Argentina, “it can be said with certainty that this hunting is actually commercial whaling disguised as scientific research”.⁹⁵

It is crucial to highlight that the legal framework in Colombia does not seem to fully align with the evolving attitudes towards animals and the environment. While there are laws related to animal protection and welfare, as well as regulations prohibiting their exploitation and certain environmental actions,⁹⁶ it is evident in practice that the approach remains centered on the instrumentalization of animals and the exploitation of biodiversity. This perspective reflects a naturalized state of dominance, where human interests take precedence, and the rights of animals as sentient beings are overlooked. The legal system, in this sense, continues to perpetuate a view that animals and natural resources are primarily tools for human use, rather than acknowledging their intrinsic value and rights. As a result, even though there may be legal provisions in place, the effective protection of animals and the environment is undermined by ingrained societal and legal norms that prioritize human needs over the well-being of other species. This disconnection between legal frameworks and ethical considerations demonstrates the need for a more profound shift in both legal structures and societal values to ensure that animals are recognized not just as property, but as beings with inherent rights deserving of respect and protection.⁹⁷ As a result, it is crucial to acknowledge that the resistant perspective adopted regarding armed conflict has not led to the creation of legal interest or moral equality similar to what has been granted to human victims in the post-conflict period. Despite the profound environmental destruction caused by armed conflicts, including the devastation of habitats and biodiversity, the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that adequately addresses environmental harm, offering protection and compensation akin to the focus on human victims in post-conflict situations, remains evident. Legal systems in many post-conflict societies have primarily concentrated on human rights and the rebuilding of communities affected by violence, while environmental consequences are often overlooked. This disparity highlights a fundamental flaw in the post-conflict reconstruction approach, where environmental damage is not given the same moral or legal consideration as human suffering.⁹⁸ Consequently, recognizing the rights of the environment and non-human inhabitants in post-conflict justice and reconstruction processes has been marginalized, and the long-term effects of environmental destruction are less prioritized. To ensure equal attention to the environment and its non-human inhabitants, a shift in this perspective is

⁹⁵ Juan Trujillo Cabrera, *Los derechos de los animales en Colombia*, Corporación Universitaria Republicana, 7 REV. REPUBLICANA, at 69

⁹⁶ Padilla, *supra* note 15.

⁹⁷ Elizabeth Anderson, *Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life*, in ANIMAL RIGHTS. CURRENT DEBATES AND NEW DIRECTIONS (Sunstein Cass R. & Martha Nussbaum eds., 2004).

⁹⁸ DANIELLA DAM-DE-JONG, INTERNATIONAL LAW AND GOVERNANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT SOLUTIONS, 121 (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

essential. This disparity highlights the urgent need for a review and strengthening of existing legal regulations, not only to recognize these rights but also to establish mechanisms that ensure the consistent application of these regulations in conflict situations. Only through a more equitable and comprehensive development toward animals and nature, aligned with the growing awareness of their rights, can a legal framework be established that genuinely supports the protection and well-being of all forms of life affected by armed conflict in Colombia.

V. The Impact of Human Relations on Biodiversity and Proposals for the Future in Colombia

In Colombia's history, the relationship between people, biodiversity, and animals has been influenced by a perspective of control and exploitation. Therefore, legislation and government policies can play a crucial role in transforming this relationship towards a more ethical and respectful approach by recognizing the importance of moving away from the mindset of ownership and the instrumentalization of animals and biodiversity.

To ensure the recognition and preservation of animal and biodiversity rights, it is recommended to adopt a doctrine based on respect and equality of conditions. Dynamic policies should be employed with the aim of promoting care and preserving the right to life. This principle is fundamental not only for the overall well-being of the planet but also for our specific land. Therefore, there is a need for a thorough analysis and legal strengthening that recognizes this essential component.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) in Colombia, created specifically to handle crimes connected to armed conflict and peacebuilding, can play a key role in incorporating animal rights into its legal processes. Despite existing limitations in the predominantly anthropocentric approach, this does not prevent recognizing the victimhood and comprehensive reparation of harm caused to non-human bodies and territories. Some actions by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) have attempted to fill this gap. Currently, Colombian judges have recognized more than nine rivers, two national parks,⁹⁹ and other ecosystems such as high-altitude wetlands (paramos)¹⁰⁰ and Amazon¹⁰¹ rainforests as “sub-

⁹⁹ See generally Juan Felipe Rodríguez v. Presidencia de la República and others; Tribunal Superior [T. Sup.] [Ibagué State Superior Tribunal], Sala Quinta Laboral Ibagué 2020, N. 2020-000091 (Colomb.) (Los Nevados National Natural Park case); Corte Suprema de Justicia [C.S.J.] [Supreme Court], Sala de Casación Civil 2020, STC3872-2020 (Colomb.) (Isla Salamanca National Natural Park case).

¹⁰⁰ Corte Constitucional [C.C.] [Constitutional Court], Tribunal Administrativo de Boyacá, August 9, 2018, 15238-3333-002-2018-00016-01 (Colomb.) (Páramo de Pisba case).

¹⁰¹ Corte Suprema de Justicia JUSTICIA [C.S.J.] [Supreme Court], SALA CIVIL, april

ject of rights”.¹⁰² This process began in 2016, when for the first time, a river was recognized as a non-human body and a “subject of rights”. In ruling T-622 of 2016, the Constitutional Court of Colombia declared that the Atrato River has “rights that imply its protection, conservation, maintenance and [...] restoration”.¹⁰³ This ruling was issued following a tutela¹⁰⁴ (protective writ) petition filed by indigenous communities residing alongside the Atrato River. They demonstrated in their petition that government institutions had violated their fundamental rights to their land and culture. According to the claimants, the lack of effective oversight over illegal mining activities in the river basin —overlapping with their ancestral territories— threatened their traditional way of life. The court, in its ruling, linked the illegal extraction in the Atrato River basin with armed conflict: “the rise of illegal mining of gold and other precious metals [in the Basin of the Atrato River and its tributaries] has opened up alarmingly —as a financier of the armed conflict— which is generating worrying socio-environmental conflicts that materialize in an indiscriminate struggle for the control of territories and natural resources”.¹⁰⁵

As a result, the area and its communities have faced consequences such as forced displacement, ecosystem destruction, deforestation, extinction of native species, and river pollution —factors that seriously endanger the country’s natural and cultural heritage.¹⁰⁶ Beyond the damages caused by illegal activities, the Supreme Court emphasized that “policies and legislation have emphasized access for economic use and exploitation to the detriment of the protection of the rights of the environment and of the communities”.¹⁰⁷

5, 2018, M.P: Luis Armando Tolosa Villabona, STC4360-2018, Expediente 11001-22-03-000-2018-00319-01 [*hereinafter* Decision STC4360-2018].

¹⁰² The Quindío State Superior Tribunal, Fourth Decision Chamber, ruled on March 15, 2019, case No. 2019-00024 (Quindío River case); The Third Tribunal of Execution for Penalties and Security in Cali, Valle del Cauca, ruled on July 22, 2019, case No. 00043 (Pance River case); The Medellín State Superior Tribunal, Civil Court No. Four, ruled on June 17, 2019, case No. 2019-076 (Cauca River case); The Administrative Tribunal of Tolima, handled the Personería Municipal de Ibagué, Ministry of Environment, and others case in 2019 (Tolima Rivers case); The Constitutional Court, ruled in Luz Marina Díaz et al. v. Empresa de Servicios Públicos del Municipio de La Plata-Huila, case No. 2019-114 (La Plata Huila River case); The Fourth Tribunal of Execution for Penalties and Security in Pereira, Risaralda, ruled on Tutela 036-2019 (Otún River case); and The First Criminal Tribunal of the Circuit of Neiva Huila ruled in Andres Felipe Rojas Rodriguez and Daniel Leandro Sanz Perdomo v. Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible et al., case No. 41001-3109-001-2019-00066-00 (Magdalena River case).

¹⁰³ Corte Constitucional [C.C.] [Constitutional Court], november 10, 2016, Sentencia T-622/16, translated in *The Judgement for River Atrato (Colombia) Is Now in English!*, GARN (July 2, 2019), <https://delawarelaw.widener.edu/files/resources/riveratratodecisionenglishdrpdellaw.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/AN2K9KXC>] [*hereinafter* Judgment T-622/16].

¹⁰⁴ According to “Constitución Política de Colombia” [C.P.] art. 86, a Tutela is a legal mechanism in Colombia to protect fundamental rights.

¹⁰⁵ Constitutional Court, *supra* note 100, at 9.35; Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Betancur, *supra* note 56 at 19–20.

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at 9.31; Constitutional Court, *supra* note 100, at 9.35.; Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Be-

The court determined that the government had not only failed to recognize the river as an ecosystem but also as a territory that enables local communities to develop their cultural rights. Therefore, the government had not understood the existence of a “biocultural” relationship between the river and local communities that deserves constitutional protection. The legal remedy was the recognition of the river as a legal subject and the establishment of a “Guardians’ Council”, composed of one member from the claimant communities and one representative of the Colombian government. This council is tasked with representing and protecting the river in all respects. This ruling presents an innovative solution to social and environmental problems. For years, the government had neglected the Atrato River territories and marginalized adjacent communities. Thus, by creating a Guardianship Council with decision-making power, a novel form of community participation and environmental governance was established—one not foreseen by ordinary law. Interestingly, this governance was entrusted to the local population whose field experience and knowledge can offer valuable perspectives on more appropriate and sustainable interactions with the Atrato River ecosystem.¹⁰⁸

Recognizing nature as a rights-bearing subject creates a demand to end the duality between society and nature; a call for alternatives instead of worn-out development discourses, and a response for reproductive systems instead of the dominant economic growth model. Undoubtedly, the rights of nature reveal the anthropocentric limitations of environmental law and emphasize the need to envision and create strategies that support the inseparable and intertwined bonds between humans and nature.¹⁰⁹ Given the recognition of “rights of nature” for rivers and other non-human entities, one may ask whether ecosystems that have suffered negative impacts from war, can be recognized as victims of armed conflict? If so, can rivers, ecosystems, or animals be subject to reparation and restoration for the damage inflicted? In recent years, the Research and Prosecution Unit of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace has declared the environment as the “silent victim of armed conflict,” in an investigation conducted in the southern region of the country (Nariño). This unit has stated that it seeks “to be seeking [environmental] reparation mechanisms and guarantees of non-repetition”.¹¹⁰

tancur, *supra* note 56 at 20.

¹⁰⁸ Luisa Gómez-Betancur, *The Rights of Nature in the Colombian Amazon: Examining Challenges and Opportunities in a Transitional Justice Setting*, 25 UCLA J. INT’L L. & FOREIGN AFF. (2020), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bk379rd>; Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Betancur, *supra* note 56 at 20.

¹⁰⁹ *Id.*

¹¹⁰ Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (*hereinafter* JEP), Unidad de Investigación y Acusación, *Unidad de Investigación y Acusación de la JEP, “Reconoce como víctima silenciosa el medio ambiente”, Comunicado 009*, (June 5, 2019), <https://www.jep.gov>; Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Betancur, *supra* note 56 at 21..

The rights of nature have also been mentioned by other units of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.¹¹¹ Notably, judges have accepted the limitations of the duality or opposition between society and nature, and instead have promoted a more intertwined dialogue between these two worlds. They have emphasized the concept of territory as a victim —“a living whole and sustenance of identity and harmony”. According to indigenous ontologies, “territory” does not refer to a separation between material, cultural, and spiritual realms, but rather humans and non-humans (such as animals, land, rivers, etc.) are mutually connected and interdependent.¹¹² Based on this perspective, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace—which is one of the most diverse courts globally in terms of gender and ethnicity—has issued multiple rulings recognizing territories as victims of armed conflict.¹¹³ According to recent decisions, the territories of Katsa Su and Cxhab Wala Kile belonging to the indigenous Awá and Nasa peoples,¹¹⁴ along with territories of Afro-Colombian communities in the municipalities of Tumaco, Ricaurte, and Barbacoas,¹¹⁵ have been recognized as rights-bearing subjects. These decisions, along with others, including the territory of Eperara Euja belonging to the Eperara Siapidara people and nine other indigenous communities and peoples, have also been issued.¹¹⁶ Although a close examination of the cases in Colombia reveals that there is no unique, standard, or unified content for “rights of nature” and many challenges remain in

¹¹¹ JEP ET AL., ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY, LEGAL PLURALISM AND PRIOR CONSULTATION: COORDINATION AND ARTICULATION INSTRUMENTS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND THE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF TRUTH, JUSTICE, REPARATION AND NON-REPETITION (SIVJRNR), (2019), [<https://perma.cc/5E8L-246W>].

¹¹² The idea of nature as a victim was referenced by Decree-Law 4633 of 2011, known as the Law of Victims for Indigenous Communities. This legislation, a political victory for the indigenous peoples’ organizations, establishes that indigenous peoples have “special and collective ties” with “Mother Earth” (Article 3) and have the right to “harmonious coexistence in the territories” (Article 29). In addition, it recognizes that the territory is “a living whole and sustenance of identity and harmony” and that it “suffers damage when it is violated or desecrated by the internal armed conflict” (Article 45). “Spiritual healing” is part of the integral reparation of the territory (Article 8); Belkis Izquierdo & Lieselotte Viaene, *Decolonizing Transitional Justice From Indigenous Territories*, ICIP (2018), http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero34/articles_centrales/article_central_2 [<https://perma.cc/VX78-KC9R>].

¹¹³ See Santiago Pardo Rodríguez, *A Second Chance on Earth: Understanding the Selection Process of the Judges of the Colombian Special Jurisdiction for Peace* 10 NOTRE DAME J. INT’L & COMPAR. L. 209, 261–262 (2020).

¹¹⁴ JEP, *Chamber of Recognition of Truth, Responsibility and Determination of Facts and Conducts [SRVR]*, Order SRVBIT 079 (November 12, 2020); Order SRVBIT 099, Presiding Judge: B. F. Izquierdo Torres (December 3, 2019); Order SRVBIT 002, Presiding Judge: R. Sánchez (January 17, 2020).

¹¹⁵ JEP, *Chamber of Recognition of Truth, Responsibility and Determination of Facts and Conducts [SRVR]*, January 24, 2020, Presiding Judge: B. F. Izquierdo Torres, Order SRVBIT 018; see also JEP, *Chamber of Recognition of Truth, Responsibility and Determination of Facts and Conducts [SRVR]*, October 21, 2019, Presiding Judge: B. F. Izquierdo Torres, Order SRVBIT 067.

¹¹⁶ JEP, *Chamber of Recognition of Truth, Responsibility and Determination of Facts and Conducts [SRVR]*, June 10, 2020, Presiding Judge: B. F. Izquierdo Torres, Order SRVBIT 094.

their implementation, this approach may represent a promising path to fill the gaps regarding anthropocentric versus ecocentric conflicts, guaranteeing justice, truth, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition also for territories, rivers, and animals.¹¹⁷ In conclusion, it can be said that Colombia's legislation should evolve toward a more inclusive approach, incorporating an "ecopsychological" perspective—one that embraces transformative environmental constitutional law and the recognition of eco-rights.

On an international scale, there have been notable practices in recognizing the rights of animals and biodiversity. A clear example of this can be found in Argentina, where the right to the environment takes precedence over the instrumental use of dolphins.¹¹⁸ Similarly, in 2010, Bolivia introduced the "Law of Mother Earth," which recognizes the rights of nature and promotes sustainable development. This law incorporates Indigenous worldviews and emphasizes harmony between human beings and ecosystems.¹¹⁹ Bolivia declared that ecological balance should be maintained in relation to healthy development, and it allowed the relocation of animals to new places to avoid overcrowded conditions.¹²⁰ Furthermore, in Ecuador, a movement advocating to animal rights has led to the adoption of laws and regulations aimed at protecting these creatures. Ecuador is one of the global pioneers in granting legal rights to nature. Its 2008 Constitution recognizes nature as a legal entity, allowing ecosystems to be defended in court. This framework has led to significant legal actions aimed at protecting biodiversity and preventing environmental degradation. This shift towards more compassionate and ecological perspectives aligns with a broader global movement for environmental justice and the ethical treatment of animals.¹²¹ Brazil has established extensive protected areas, including the Amazon rainforest, which are crucial for preserving biodiversity. Although challenges such as deforestation persist, the country's legal frameworks and conservation initiatives continue to play a vital role in safeguarding its rich biological diversity.¹²² Costa Rica implemented the 1998 Biodiversity Law, which supports the intellectual property rights of indigenous and rural communities in the use of natural resources and biodiversity. This law is considered one of the most comprehensive pieces of legislation for the implementation of the Convention on

¹¹⁷ Ariza Buitrago & Gómez Betancur, *supra* note 56.

¹¹⁸ Juzgado Nacional de Primera Instancia en lo Contencioso-Administrativo Federal N° 2 (JN Federal Contencioso Administrativo), Alberto E. Kattan et al. v. National Government – Executive Power, May 10, 1983, Wordpress.com

¹¹⁹ Bernardo Hernández-Umaña, Oliver Mauricio Esguerra Ramírez & Karen Giovanna Añaños Bedriñana, *Earth Jurisprudence in South America: Trends and Developments*, 8 J. INFRSTR., POL'Y & DEV. 3515, 9-10 (2024).

¹²⁰ Andrea Padilla, *Los animales al Derecho* (2018) (Ph.D. dissertation, Repositorio Institucional Séneca), <https://repositorio.uniandes.edu.co/server/api/core/bitstreams/f80a25a2-975e-411a-a7e4-a8a4cdd9c93d/content>.

¹²¹ Hernández-Umaña, *supra* note 119.

¹²² Janeth Lessmann et al., *The Role of Funding in the Performance of Latin America's Protected Areas*, 121 PROC. NAT'L ACAD. SCI. e2307521121 (2024).

Biological Diversity.¹²³ This trend reflects a growing recognition of the importance of considering non-human life in legal frameworks, not just as subjects to be exploited but as beings deserving of rights and protection.¹²⁴

In the United Kingdom and the United States, there is significant legal support for animal rights, and this is not merely a coincidence. On the contrary, it stems from a deep social belief in the responsibility to respect animals and their environment.¹²⁵ This belief has evolved over time through cultural values that emphasize compassion and ethical treatment of all living beings. Unfortunately, in many societies, including Colombia, this awareness is notably absent. However, it is important to note that this observation does not deny animals' ability to experience pain or suffering. Rather, it reflects a public indifference or a lack of sufficient interest in advocating for the comprehensive and growing recognition of these rights.¹²⁶ This situation requires a shift in social values towards a more empathetic and responsible approach towards animals, where their intrinsic value is recognized beyond their utilitarian value to human beings.¹²⁷

Consequently, it can be argued that there is a direct connection between social awareness and the level of legal protections for animals. This connection explains why animals that are closer to human beings, such as pets, receive more legal protection, while some laboratory practices remain exempt from these protections. In this regard, the existing laws in the UK play a crucial role in safeguarding animal rights. One of the most prominent and oldest laws in this area is the "Protection of Animals Act 1911", which is considered the foundation of anti-cruelty laws for animals in England and Wales.¹²⁸ At the time, this law represented a significant step toward animal welfare, and it has since undergone various amendments to address emerging needs in animal rights. Among the changes to this law are increased penalties for cruelty toward animals and improvements in the conditions of animal care and transport.¹²⁹ In Denmark, the Danish Animal Welfare Act came into force in 2021, replacing the former Animal Protection Act. This framework law covers nearly all as-

¹²³ Michael J. Miller, *Biodiversity Policy Making in Costa Rica: Pursuing Indigenous and Peasant Rights*, *ST A RICA*, 15 J. ENVIRONMENT & DEV. 359-381 (2006).

¹²⁴ Mauro Leonel Fuentes, *Los derechos de los animales: una aproximación a los derechos de la naturaleza en el Ecuador*, *FORUM ANIMAL L. STUD.*, (July 17, 2020).

¹²⁵ Rachel Monaghan, *Not Quite Terrorism: Animal Rights Extremism in the United Kingdom*, 36 *STUD. CONFLICT & TERRORISM* 933, 933-951 (2013).

¹²⁶ Brayan Benjamín Nicolás Herrera Silva, *Derechos de los Animales: La Legislación Nacional Interna como Barrera Legal para el Reconocimiento de la Subjetividad Jurídica Animal*, 13 *VIA INVENIENDI ET IUDICANDI* 55, 55-93 (2018).

¹²⁷ Carlos Contreras, *Sentient Beings Protected by Law. Analysis of Recent Changes in Colombian Animal Welfare Legislation*, 2 *GLOBAL J. ANIMAL L.* 1, 1-19 (2016).

¹²⁸ Jessica Horton, *UK Animal Protection Legislation: The Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Act 2019 in ANIMAL LAW WORLDWIDE*, (Dalpane F., Baideldinova M eds., T.M.C. Asser Press, The Hague, 2024) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-643-7_24.

¹²⁹ ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE (2006), PROTECTION OF ANIMALS ACT 1911, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2006/11/part/1>.

pects related to animal welfare, except for animal experimentation, which is regulated under separate legislation. Like its predecessor, the new law includes general principles regarding the protection and welfare of various animal species. Additionally, it introduces a large number of general delegation provisions that authorize the Minister for Food to issue regulations in several areas such as slaughter, surgical treatment, animal care and housing, supervision, transport, professional training, zoos, and more. Prior to 2021, the former Animal Protection Act was supplemented by several specific laws passed by Parliament for particular species, such as farm animals, dogs, and horses. However, to enhance the flexibility of the legislative process, the new Animal Welfare Act expanded the scope of delegated authority and removed the need for separate legislation for each species at the parliamentary level.¹³⁰ These changes reflect the ongoing progress toward strengthening legal protections for animals and emphasize the ethical responsibility of societies toward living beings.

At the European Union level, in the 2015 judgment of the case *Zuchtvieh-Export GmbH v Stadt Kempten* (C-424/13), the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that animal welfare regulations must be observed throughout the entire journey of live animal exports, including transit through non-EU countries. In this case, a German company intended to export cattle to Uzbekistan without providing the necessary rest stops for the animals. The Court held that Member States may refuse to authorize exports if animal welfare standards are not met, even when the transport takes place outside the territory of the European Union.¹³¹ The European Court of Human Rights also found itself in a position where it had to address the issue in the case of *Herman v. Germany*. In this case, the applicant based their request on environmental awareness reasons, arguing against the granting of hunting rights on their private land.¹³² In Colombia, the role of laws and governmental policies is pivotal in facilitating significant changes in the relationship between individuals, biodiversity, and animals. To overcome the dominance that has historically been imposed upon them, it is essential to reconsider the relationship and move away from the ownership and instrumental view that has been dominant for centuries. This requires a transformation in the legal framework to promote a more ethical and respectful approach towards animals and the environment.¹³³ Shifting towards a more eco-centric perspective will not only challenge the historical mindset of

¹³⁰ Horton, *supra* note 128.

¹³¹ BBC, Editorial, *EU court: Animal welfare rules apply to animals leaving EU*, (April 23, 2015), https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32436133?utm_source=; Editorial, *Export of live animals for slaughter: European Court rules that animal welfare laws apply outside the EU*, Rosalind English, (29 April 2015), https://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2015/04/29/export-of-live-animals-for-slaughter-european-court-rules-that-animal-welfare-laws-apply-outside-the-eu/?utm_source=;

¹³² Rosa Fernández, *International Environmental Jurisprudence*, 3 RCDA, 2012, <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/rcda/article/download/322600/413238>.

¹³³ Iván Vargas Chaves et al., *Recognizing the Rights of Nature in Colombia: The Atrato River Case*, 17 JURÍDICAS, at 13, (2020).

exploitation but also encourage a new approach that recognizes the inherent value of animals and biodiversity, fostering a relationship based on coexistence rather than domination. By revisiting and reforming these entrenched views, Colombia can advance toward a legal and ethical paradigm that aligns more closely with the values of environmental sustainability and animal welfare.

The Law 84 of 1989 (Animal Protection Statute), while offering specific protections for animals, could be improved by adopting a broader approach that acknowledges animals' intrinsic value, rather than seeing them only as tools or resources for human use. While this law lays the groundwork for animal welfare, it does not go far enough in recognizing animals as beings with inherent worth, deserving of rights independent of their utility to human beings. Article 6 and the subsequent provisions of Colombia's law establish administrative and procedural regulations, among which one of the most important is granting the National Police and relevant law enforcement authorities the power to preemptively seize any animal found to be in a vulnerable situation. This applies when there is evidence or information indicating behaviors that constitute animal abuse. This change is considered an amendment to the law, with a new article (Article 46 (a)) added to the statute. Moreover, this law stipulates that revenues from fines related to Statute of Animal Protection violations must be exclusively allocated to the processes of drafting, informing, implementing, and monitoring animal protection policies, as well as to awareness campaigns, public education, and the establishment of animal protection funds. In this regard, animal welfare organizations, animal advocacy councils, or similar bodies will actively participate in achieving these goals (paragraph of the new Article 46 of the Statute of Animal Protection). Finally, Article 10 of the new law in Colombia provides that the Ministry of Environment, in coordination with relevant institutions, may conduct educational campaigns aimed at changing animal care practices and promoting best practices for animal welfare. This highlights the crucial role of public education in fostering progress and encouraging more respectful and appropriate treatment of animals.¹³⁴ Following this, Law 1774 of 2016¹³⁵ recognizes animals as sentient beings capable of feeling pain, but it could have gone further in explicitly prohibiting the use of animals as property. The failure to establish such provisions limits the legal framework for animals' protection. Adopting an approach that sees animals as individuals with non-transferable rights could contribute to changing the deeply ingrained narrative of human dominance. This shift would recognize that natural resources are no

¹³⁴ Carlos Andrés Contreras López, *Colombia: animales como seres sintientes protegidos por el Derecho penal*, FORUM ANIMAL L. STUD., 4 (2016).

¹³⁵ Ley 1774, 2016. Congreso de Colombia [Congress of Colombia], Jan. 6 2016. (Law 1774, enacted in 2016 by the Congress of Colombia, is a reform law that modifies several important Colombian laws, including the Civil Code, Law 84 of 1989, the Penal Code, and the Code of Criminal Procedure. Additionally, it introduces other provisions. In other words, this law encompasses a set of amendments to various laws) <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=68135>.

longer merely at the discretion of men and women but are entrusted to them for stewardship and protection. Such a transformation would align legal frameworks with the growing global acknowledgment of animal rights, signaling a cultural and legal shift towards viewing animals not as property but as beings with moral standing and legal protection. This kind of legal evolution would not only benefit animals but also strengthen the ethical foundations of human interactions with the environment and biodiversity.¹³⁶

The Colombian Constitution of 1991, as a pioneering and comprehensive legal framework, provides a strong foundation for the protection of animal rights. Article 79 is one of the key provisions in this regard, guaranteeing every individual the right to enjoy a healthy environment. This article not only obligates the government to protect the environment but also implicitly refers to the protection of animals as part of ecological balance. The Constitution emphasizes the principle that animal welfare is directly linked to environmental preservation, and therefore, preventing cruelty and exploitation of animals is established as a legal duty of the government. Furthermore, Article 80 holds the government responsible for planning and implementing policies aimed at conserving natural resources, restoring ecological balance, and protecting biodiversity. Since animals are an integral part of biodiversity, this article implicitly addresses the protection of animal species and their habitats. This legal obligation ensures that animal protection is incorporated into the country's broader environmental policies, fostering a sustainable balance between human beings and nature. Additionally, Article 334 encourages the government to promote sustainable economic development that respects environmental standards and animal welfare. This article guides that development policies should be designed with environmental responsibility in mind and prevent activities that could harm animals. The Constitution's Article 58 refers to the collective rights of the people to protect the environment and cultural heritage, which generally includes respect for animals as well. This collective approach enhances animal rights protection within communities and enables local people to actively participate in animal conservation.¹³⁷ The Constitution clearly does not limit the immediate protection of ecosystems or any of their components to a liberal perspective, where human beings can freely exploit other living beings or natural resources as they see fit. Instead, it emphasizes that the relationship between human beings and the environment must be governed by specific patterns and requirements that define not only their freedoms but also their responsibilities. Within this framework, any use of natural resources or living beings must align with the preservation of biodiversity and the integrity of ecosystems, rather than acting against them. This approach underscores the need to consider the

¹³⁶ Iván Darío Ávila Gaitán, *Derechos Humanos, Derecho Animal y Crítica de la Violencia Especista: El Lugar de la Sintiencia*, 6 ANÁLISIS JURÍDICO-POLÍTICO at 15 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.22490/26655489.7271>.

¹³⁷ CONSTITUCIÓN POLÍTICA DE COLOMBIA (C.P.), art. 79, 1991.

rights of living beings as part of nature and emphasizes that human beings must responsibly use these resources while taking into account the long-term impacts of their actions on the environment and ecosystems. Therefore, the Constitution effectively supports principles that can ensure the protection of the environment and all its components against human threats and misuses. This approach is especially significant in a time when environmental crises and climate change remain serious threats, as it highlights the importance of joint efforts to safeguard natural resources.¹³⁸

It is important to consider how the law, through the imposition of prison sentences, restrictions, and heavy fines, seeks to establish a robust legal framework for animal protection. However, the interaction of this law with the dynamics of conflict may create tensions and practical challenges. For example, the preservation of the Colombian Amazon, part of which is attributed to the barriers imposed by violence, raises questions about how to balance animal protection with the social, economic, and environmental complexities that arise in the post-conflict context. The goal of animal protection laws is to enforce heavy penalties for cruel treatment of animals, but in countries like Colombia, which are in the process of rebuilding after prolonged conflict, other priorities also exist.¹³⁹ In these areas, the preservation of natural resources, especially the Amazon, which is safeguarded due to specific factors such as barriers against extraction projects, faces new challenges. These challenges include balancing environmental protection with the social and economic needs of communities suffering from the consequences of conflict. Thus, the effective implementation of laws in such areas requires a comprehensive approach that not only protects animals but also addresses the social and economic needs of post-conflict regions. This law must be designed in a way that can harmonize with the complexities of reconstruction and adaptation to post-conflict conditions while simultaneously safeguarding animal rights.¹⁴⁰ Under Law 1448 of 2011,¹⁴¹ which specifically addresses the rights of victims in Colombia, the definition of victims can be expanded to include animals. This expansion means that the suffering of animals could be recognized as a significant harm, allowing for comprehensive reparative measures that not only address material damages but also the emotional harm caused by unnecessary violence. This could lay the groundwork for more comprehensive compensation frameworks that address both physical and psychological injuries inflicted on animals, as well as the new Law 2294 of 2023.¹⁴² This means that the law, which contains specific rules like

¹³⁸ Padilla, *supra* note 15, at 72.

¹³⁹ Contreras, *supra* note 127.

¹⁴⁰ Beckline Mukete et al., *Environmental Degradation in Conflict and Post-conflict Regions*, 4 INT'L J. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & POL'Y, 187(2016).

¹⁴¹ CONGRESS OF COLOMBIA, LAW 1448 OF 2011: ESTABLISHING MEASURES FOR THE CARE, ASSISTANCE, AND COMPREHENSIVE REPARATION OF VICTIMS OF THE INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AND OTHER PROVISIONS (2011)

¹⁴² LAW 2294 OF 2023: ISSUING THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022–2026 “COLOM-

Articles 27, 31, 42, and 178 aimed at protecting and caring for animals, could improve by including ethical principles in every aspect of how humans interact with animals. If provisions are included in this law to promote ethical treatment of animals and prevent their unnecessary exploitation, it could lead to a significant shift in legal frameworks. Such changes would not only assist in protecting animal rights but could also enhance social awareness and shift behaviors at various levels, recognizing all living beings as valuable and deserving respect in human processes, including economics and development. These actions could contribute to the creation of a more comprehensive legal framework for animal protection in Colombia and globally.

A significant advancement in animal protection can be found in Law 2318 of 2023,¹⁴³ which prohibits the use of animals to suppress protests, as well as gatherings of riots and disturbances. This regulation introduces changes to the provisions of Law 1801 of 2016¹⁴⁴ and establishes principles and duties for police officers, particularly concerning the use of force and the prohibition of using animals to control riots. While this law is not directly related to armed conflicts, it sets out regulations for maintaining public order, emphasizing the need to avoid unnecessary use of force and to respect the welfare of animals. This development reflects a broader understanding of the ethical treatment of animals in public safety operations and highlights the growing recognition of their rights in various aspects of societal law enforcement.

The Colombian government can create significant changes in societal attitudes towards animals by leading educational initiatives that promote empathy for all forms of life and emphasize the importance of living in harmony and peace with nature. These initiatives can include campaigns that raise public awareness about animal rights, the necessity of protecting biodiversity, and respecting the rights of living beings. Furthermore, by strengthening protective laws and ensuring the enforcement of animal rights across all social and economic sectors, the government can play a key role in transforming the way individuals interact with animals and the environment. In this context, legislation and public policies should actively promote ethical and legal respect for animals in all situations, including during conflicts. Shifting the mindset from ownership to recognizing the intrinsic value of animals, Colombia can set an example for other nations in terms of animal rights protection and improving

BIA, GLOBAL POWER OF LIFE,” MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, (May 19, 2023), www.minambiente.gov.co/documento-normativa/ley-2294-de2023/#:~:text=19%20de%20mayo%20de%202023,Potencia%20Mundial%20de%20la%20Vida%20E2%80%9D.

¹⁴³ LAW 2318 OF 2023: BY WHICH THE USE OF ANIMALS TO DETER DEMONSTRATIONS, RIOTS, AND UPRISINGS IS PROHIBITED, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, (2023), www.camara.gov.co/presidente-petro-sanciona-la-ley-que-prohibe-el-uso-de-animales-en-protestas#:~:text=La%20sanci%C3%B3n%20de%20ley%202318,nunca%20m%C3%A1s%20podr%C3%A1n%20ser%20usados.

¹⁴⁴ LAW 1801 OF 2016: BY WHICH THE NATIONAL CODE OF SECURITY AND CITIZEN COEXISTENCE IS ISSUED, CONGRESS OF COLOMBIA, (July 29, 2016), www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=80538.

their living conditions, thus making effective strides toward achieving environmental justice.

VI. Conclusion

This study concludes that the armed conflicts in Colombia have not only caused extensive human suffering but have also severely impacted biodiversity and the welfare of sentient beings. The exploitation of natural resources, fueled by conflict, has led to habitat destruction, deforestation, and a significant loss of species, exacerbating ecological imbalances and undermining the resilience of ecosystems. Current legal frameworks, though gradually recognizing the rights of animals and biodiversity, remain insufficiently developed to address the complex challenges arising from these intersections. The findings highlight a pressing need for Colombia to adopt an integrated and transformative approach that extends legal protections to animals and ecosystems, ensuring their recognition as critical stakeholders in post-conflict reconstruction. By transitioning from an anthropocentric to a more ecocentric or biocentric legal paradigm, Colombia has the opportunity to position itself as a regional leader in sustainable development and environmental justice. Such an evolution requires not only legal reforms but also the establishment of mechanisms for effective implementation and enforcement. The study emphasizes that acknowledging biodiversity rights as integral to broader reparative frameworks can significantly contribute to achieving sustainable peace, reducing ecological injustices, and fostering harmony between human beings and nature. It advocates for interdisciplinary and empathetic strategies to mitigate the intertwined crises of violence, ecological degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

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