

The 3rd Niwano Peace Prize Visionary Award



Ms. Elizabeth Moreno Barco

Nationality:	Colombia
Birth:	1968
Position:	Human rights defender Coordinator, Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó- FISCH (Inter-ethnic Forum Solidarity Chocó)
Religion:	Catholic

Ms. Elizabeth Moreno Barco, known as 'Chava,' is a displaced person, one of 8 million Colombians displaced by the country's long-term internal conflict.

Despite the Peace Accord of 2016 between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Latin America's largest dissident armed guerrilla organization) and the government that drew global attention, the Choco region is still a conflict zone, where multiple armed groups are active. The aggressors are left-wing guerrilla organizations, including remnants of the FARC, right-wing paramilitary groups, drug criminal organizations, and illegal mining interests. People caught up in their armed conflicts.

Chava has been a community leader for decades in the Choco region. Her widely recognized sensitivity to community concerns and commitment to peace and human rights led to her election to lead a regional association of Afro-Colombians by 72 communities in the San Juan region, known as ACADESAN. This robust grassroots organization has been organizing since the 1980s, with sustained, long-term support from a Catholic order of nuns, the Missionary Sisters of Mother Laura (known as "Lauritas"), and is one of the first ethnic councils established in Colombia.

Since May 2023, she has been the coordinator of the Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó - FISCH (Inter-ethnic Forum Solidarity Chocó), a larger coalition of citizen-led organizations. FISCH leads humanitarian efforts to support civilians caught in the crossfire and advocacy to bring these groups to the ongoing government-promoted peace talks. FISCH collaborates closely with the local Catholic Diocese, the United Nations, and many other human rights and refugee support organizations, as well as with Afro-Colombian and Indigenous counterpart organizations in other parts of Colombia.

'Chava' Elizabeth Moreno's long-term work to support displaced communities earned her recent Nansen Refugee Award from the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR). She also addressed the UN Security Council. The Nansen Refugee Award honors individuals, groups, and organizations that have taken extraordinary action to protect refugees, internally displaced people, and stateless people.

Not only in the region, she recently took on a national leadership role by joining the Special High-Level Forum of Ethnic Peoples of Colombia (IEANPE), a body mandated by the National Peace Accord to accompany and promote its implementation in ethnic territories.

A local Christian Sister who knew her well said, "At the meeting to negotiate for the rights of the people, when everyone, including the men, was too scared to speak, but only Chava, she got up from her seat and spoke out strongly."

In honor of Ms. Elisabet Moreno Balko, 'Chava,' who has stood by her people and continues to work for the protection of the rights and lives of many displaced people and peace in the region, even at the risk of her own life, we have chosen her as the recipient of the third Niwano Peace Prize Visionary Award.