

Colombian FARC Rebels Finish Demobilization as UN Confirms Paramilitary Activity



Bogota, February 21 (RHC)-- In Colombia, as FARC rebels completed their final demobilization and entered the last of the 26 designated safe zones, United Nations monitors reported that right-wing paramilitary groups are moving into former rebel-controlled areas displacing almost a hundred families.

Both FARC leader Timoleon Jiménez and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos celebrated the completion of "three weeks of day and night movement" which brought almost 7,000 FARC troops to U.N. supervised "green zones" — a key step in the peace agreement which ended the country's 52-year civil war — where the former left-wing guerrillas will disarm.

Observers say that it is historic that the FARC are close to disarming and transitioning. The UN Mission in Colombia also praised the development, noting that the government had not fully lived up to its promises to prepare the safe zones for the almost 7,000 FARC soldiers who will now disarm and begin their transition to civilian life.

"The FARC-EP leadership's decision to group its forces in these Zones -- despite the lack of preparation of the camps in the vast majority of these areas -- was positive," the mission said in a statement released

earlier this week.

However, the U.N. mission expressed deep concern over the arrival of right-wing paramilitaries in Northern rural areas vacated by the FARC, which has led to the displacement of 96 families, according to the BBC.

"During the visit to La Gabarra, the Mission noted similar concerns to those heard in other departments about the insecurity of communities in places that have historically been affected by violence, in particular of new threats linked to the entry of illegal armed groups," said a spokesperson for the U.N. mission which is supervising the implementation of the peace accord signed last November.

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