

Colombian Victims Demand Ceasefire and Urgency in Peace Process



Havana, September 13 (RHC)-- A group of victims of Colombia's long civil war have called on the government and leftist rebels for an immediate ceasefire so that the peace process can go forward.

"We want the peace process to be quick because the more time passes, the more casualties we have," said Reinel Barbosa, who is 28 years old and was injured by an anti-personnel mine.

Barbosa was speaking to the press at a conference in the Cuban capital, attended by conflict victims, Colombian government representatives and members of the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, or FARC.

The victims praised the atmosphere of "respect" and "willingness to listen" shown by attendees, saying: "Just by respecting and listening to the victims, one can construct the truth and the road towards peace."

Around 25,000 victims of forced disappearances and 27,000 kidnap victims have received special representation at the conference.

There was also a place for the victims of displacement, which affects 5.7 million people in the country, with special emphasis on the Afro and indigenous communities.

Nine of the 12 victims attending the conference are women and are paying “the highest price” in the conflict which has resulted in five decades of violence with over 6.5 million people being affected, said Fabrizio Hochschild, a U.N. representative in Colombia.

More than half of those affected by forced displacements were women who, in many cases, are also subjected to sexual violence, a crime under-represented in statistical figures as many are afraid to speak out.

Hochschild highlighted the “generosity” and “dignity” of the victims who instead of “pointing fingers” are thinking about ways to contribute towards peace.

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