

Colombia Extends Suspension of Air Raids on FARC by One Month



Bogota, April 10 (teleSUR-RHC) Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos announced on Thursday that he would extend the suspending of air raids on camps used by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas for an additional month.

President Santos originally issued the suspension of bombings of FARC camps on March 10, stating at the time that it was a temporary measure to help de-escalate the more than 50-year conflict in the country and help move the peace negotiations forward.

The FARC implemented a unilateral cease-fire in December 2014, which has been independently verified by human rights defenders. Santos added that the Ministry of Defense had also confirmed that the FARC was abiding by the unilateral cease-fire. "For this reason, I have decided to extend the suspension of bombings for one more month, I will continue to do so into the future," said Santos.

However the decision to suspend bombings does not preclude the Colombian government from engaging in combat on the ground, which the FARC has warned threatens the peace process. Santos made the announcement on the same day as massive marches were held throughout the country to show support

for the peace negotiations underway between the Colombian government and the FARC.

However, the decision to continue to refrain from bombing the FARC camps falls well short of the demand by marchers in Colombia who are calling for a bilateral cease-fire.

Carlos Lozano, spokesperson for the *Marcha Patriótica*, one of the groups behind Thursday's march, criticized the decision by the Colombian president not to implement a bilateral cease-fire. "The thousands and thousands of demonstrators, on April 9, demanded an indefinite and bilateral cease-fire, not a one-month suspension of bombings," said Lozano via Twitter.

President Santos, who participated in the march, also ignored demands for a national constituent assembly to be included as part of the implementation of the peace agreement, currently being negotiated in Havana.

In a statement released ahead of Thursday's rallies, the FARC reiterated its call for a national constituent assembly. "We believe together with you that there is no other path aside from a National Constituent Assembly, which brings better prospects to make real the changes Colombia needs," said Ivan Marquez, head of the FARC negotiating team in Havana.

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