

Colombian Rebels Propose Humanitarian Prisoner Release



Havana, January 18 (teleSUR-RHC) -- The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, has proposed the release of various prisoners including social leaders and rebels suffering from serious health issues as part of the ongoing peace process.

At a news conference in Havana, FARC leader Ivan Marquez said: "In this decisive phase in the peace process, we put forward for consideration by the national government, a new means of construction of confidence; an additional step in the de-escalation (of the conflict), with a clearly humanitarian content."

The declaration came two days after the FARC took aim at Colombia's "rotten" prison system, demanding prison reform to fix systemic problems.

In a statement delivered by FARC leader Sergio Ibanez on Friday, the group called for a transformation of the criminal justice system and urged the government to take "immediate measures" to put an end to "arbitrary actions and abuses" committed against "political prisoners" and prisoners of war in Colombian prisons.

Earlier in the week, negotiators from FARC and the government of Juan Manuel Santos met in Havana to begin the final phase of the peace process, begun in 2012.

The only point remaining to be discussed is how to end the conflict once and for all. The peace talks made landmark progress in 2015, bringing the two sides closer to putting an end to over 50 years of internal armed conflict. Despite the historic agreements, the FARC has warned that a resurgence in paramilitary activity and unilateral government action threaten to undermine the progress.

The conflict has become an entrenched part of Colombian life, creating more than 6.7 million victims and claiming at least 220,000 lives.

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