

Colombia Imposes One Year Ban on Bearing Guns in Public



Bogota, January 20 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos said Tuesday he will prohibit carrying weapons in the country for the next year. Santos said he was inspired by the example of Bogota, the country's capital, where officials say a ban on the bearing of arms has curbed gun violence.

The police, said Santos, convinced him that a ban on carrying guns in public has saved a "number of lives" and that pursuing the policy at the national level "should contribute to a further decrease in crime."

Last year, Colombia was ranked the fourth most deadly country in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to a government commission, 220,000 have been killed in the South American nation since 1958, the majority by right-wing paramilitaries.

Though violence from the conflict between the Colombian government and the FARC may come to a close with a pending peace deal, paramilitary groups in the country have recently escalated their activity.

Some violence is attributed to radical groups in universities, but according to Front Line Defenders, an Irish NGO, a significant portion is committed against human rights defender. One in three of human rights activists murdered worldwide are murdered in Colombia, according to the group.

About half of murdered human rights campaigners are indigenous people leading the charge against resource extraction and land confiscation. Journalists and other activists, including Afro-Colombians, trade union organizers, LGBTQ advocates and journalists, are also regularly threatened and killed.

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