

Disappeared Must Be Included in Colombia's Peace



Bogota, September 2 (RHC)-- Relatives of the thousands of people disappeared during Colombia's five-decades long armed conflict asked that their loved ones not be forgotten as the government of President Manuel Santos reached an historic peace accord with FARC guerrillas.

At a commemoration event for the International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearance -- and the Colombian government calculates that 64,920 people are unaccounted for -- men, women and children gathered in Bogota to remind the state of the "historic debt" of trying to find their relatives and returning their remains to them.

"Today we have a slogan that ... we will not forget the disappeared during peace time," said Janet Bautista, director of a foundation named after Nydia Erika Bautista, who went missing on Aug. 30, 1987, and who also suffered the loss of her friend, both of whom were rebel guerrillas with the M-19 organization which demobilized in 1990.

The downtown Bogota site where the National Museum of Memory will be erected was the scene selected by relatives, members of social organizations and activists to stage a "symbolic sowing" of people and seek a catharsis to recall the victims of forced disappearance.

Luz Maria Bernal, a mother whose son was disappeared said: "We're sowing our bodies so that here in Bogota they take notice that we have more than 45,000 disappeared around the country." She added

that "part of building a stable and lasting peace is ... (ensuring) the country knows the dimension of its own tragedy, acknowledges the pain ... that its citizens experienced."

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