

Colombians Launch Indefinite National Strike Against Killings



Bogota, October 25 (RHC)-- Social organizations, campesinos and unions in Colombia have launched an indefinite strike to protest over 150 murders of social movement activists by paramilitaries and government personnel. Led by the Patriotic March and others, the demonstrations seek to call attention to the lack of will shown by the Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos to secure the peace agreement signed nearly a year ago with the former guerilla group the FARC, now known as the Alternative Revolutionary Force of the Commons.

The marches will begin in the most rural corners of the country, making their way to the larger cities. The protest will revolve around three demands, according to the Ethnic and Popular Agrarian Summit. First, the implementation of the peace agreement; second, guarantees for social mobilization; and third, compliance with the demands of the country's agricultural workers. Demonstrators will also call for an end to the violence against social movement leaders, who have seen a rise in threats, attacks or killings since the peace agreements were signed, which have included campesinos, social rights activists, human rights fighters and environmental defenders.

In recent days, another campesino leader and a Patriotic March member was killed, bringing the number of assassinations to 162 in 2017 alone, including FARC members and their relatives. And yet another person injured on October 5th in Tumaco succumbed to injuries. Ivan Dario Muñoz Echeverria is now the ninth fatality from the deadly attack from the Esmad police on campesinos protesting the government's

forced coca substitution program which does not correspond to the peace agreement.

A letter sent to President Santos by the FARC condemned a recent episode of violence which erupted in the state of Nariño, where at least six peasants were killed allegedly by police forces among other extreme acts of repression. "Let us not allow, Mr. President, to deteriorate the trust between the parties, so costly built," the letter said.

Given the current climate of uncertainty surrounding the implementation of peace, the FARC called on the activation of all national and international mechanisms included in the agreements "so that, in an objective and calm way, we sit down to analyze the current difficulties."

Elsewhere in the capital, taxi drivers are protesting against Uber, whose initial low prices for comparable rides threaten their industry. The protest was called after the mayor of Bogota disregarded union recommendations and signed a decree, stating taxi fares must be raised and meters eradicated in favor of a more technologically advanced method, union spokesman Hugo Ospina said.

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