

# *Santos: FARC is at Nobel Award Ceremony ‘In Heart and Spirit’*

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Oslo, December 10 (RHC-teleSUR), -- In a press conference Friday with officials from the Nobel Prize Committee, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos spoke about the role the prize played in overcoming the plebiscite defeat, and suggested that the FARC absence from the award ceremony is due to the fact that both the U.S. and the European Union still label his partners in peace a “terrorist” group.

Santos said the prize was “a gift from heaven” and said it gave both the government and FARC negotiation teams a “big boost” to pursue a second peace agreement after an initial peace plan was narrowly rejected in a national plebiscite. Within a month of the award announcement, the Colombian government and FARC rebels agreed on a new plan which was unanimously approved by the Colombian Congress on Nov. 30.

Santos was the only one awarded the prestigious prize despite 5 years of mutual negotiations between the FARC rebel group and the Colombian government.

Not only were FARC leaders ignored in the awarding of the prize, they are also conspicuously absent from Saturday’s award ceremony. Santos, who arrived in the Norwegian capital Friday with a delegation including many of the conflicts victims and members of his negotiation team, acknowledged the absence saying that the FARC would be at the ceremony “in heart and spirit.” He added that he didn’t want to “create problems” by inviting FARC leaders, who are still labeled as “terrorists” by the U.S. and EU.

In a Tweet ahead of the award ceremony, the leader of FARC's peace delegation Pastor Alape was unfailingly generous in celebrating Santos' award saying it commits the Colombian President "to effective implementation" of the plan.

Santos said that he would be accepting the prize on behalf of all Colombians, and especially the victims of the 52-year civil war which killed 260, 000 people and led to the disappearance and displacement of millions more.

In an interview with the BBC on Thursday Santos said "I interpret the prize as a mandate from the international community to persevere" in the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC rebels.

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