

Colombian political party FARC considers legal action to fight murders



Bogota, June 24 (RHC)-- The Revolutionary Alternative Force of the Common (FARC) met over the weekend in Bogota to devise a legal strategy to combat the mounting number of ex-FARC murder victims before the 2016 peace accord is completely destroyed.

In a closed-door meeting, FARC officials denounced the 135 murders reported since the peace agreement was signed in November 2016. Their discussion was reportedly focused on finding alternatives to the approach taken by the administration of Colombian President Ivan Duque government that could, the group said, provide "certain guarantees on the lives of social leaders and ex-guerrillas."

"The solution is not only about protection through force, but it is also necessary to create a climate of national reconciliation," said House representative, Omar Restrepo.

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in November 2016, there have been reports of 135 murders of former guerrilla fighters, 34 of their relatives, and 11 disappearances, not including the thousands of death threats received daily throughout rural areas.

In a statement, the FARC said: "These systematic killings are a clear violation of the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace. Therefore, they are the responsibility of the state and the government, which are constitutionally obliged to guarantee the life and security of all Colombians."

Last week, reports of a tragic murder made headlines, after a female social leader, Maria del Pilar Hurtado, 34, was murdered in Cordoba while walking with her nine-year-old son. Footage from a nearby camera showed two men riding a motorcycle shoot del Pilar before driving off. Her son's screams were carried by video across social media, triggering calls for justice.

The Ombudsman's Office condemned the crime, saying: "The screams of the son of Maria del Pilar Hurtado represent the pain of a whole country." The victim and members of her community had been receiving threats since early June from the paramilitary groups like the Aguilas Negras and Gaitanista Militia of Colombia (AGC).

Andres Chica, a human rights activist said: "They did not listen to us and the paramilitaries carried out their threat. She did not belong to any union or organization, but she was a community leader and negotiator on behalf of those who settled in that area. At the end of May, people in extreme poverty took this property, and Maria del Pilar was among the negotiators who wanted to arrange a land grant, but it was finally decided to forcefully remove the families," the activist sad.

Senator Ivan Cepeda said: "Here we are witnessing a systematic plan in action to frustrate the peace process and the reforms and changes that it brings."

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