

Colombian Presidential Guard member arrested for massacre



Bogota, October 19 (RHC)-- A member of Colombia's presidential guard has been arrested for involvement in a massacre in which ten were killed in the municipality of El Tarra in North Santander.

Diego Hernando Galván Ruedas, of the 37th Infantry Battalion of the Presidential Guard, was taken into custody for the massacre that took place in July 2018. Ten were killed in the rural municipality of El Tarra, including five former FARC combatants who had laid down their weapons, one social leader and 5 other local residents.

Galvan Ruedas is also being questioned over the murder of social leader Deiver Quintero Pérez on February 2018, also in El Tarra.

The murder of social leaders has become endemic, with at least 123 killed so far this year alone. The FARC and other peace activists have slammed the government and right-wing paramilitaries for not honoring their end of the 2016 peace accords.

In other news, a viral video began circulating recently of a Colombian soldier stationed in Arauca who declared that he was defecting to the ELN leftist guerilla group.

In the video, Luis Carlos Carrillo, the defecting soldier, said: “Since I was young I have defended and have fought for the people, for the farmers, because I’m a farmer, I am poor like many who have been in the army. The majority of us are poor. They kept us under their order and we had to do what they told us and honestly, because of that I took the decision to desert, because I want to defend the people, I’m not about oppressing the people and the farmers.”

There are growing concerns that Colombia’s fragile peace is steadily becoming undone. The failure of the state to fully end violence and that of right-wing paramilitaries resulted in a split within the now legal FARC party. A faction within the leadership, some of whom played a leading role in the peace negotiations, decided to take up arms once again in August. This move was condemned by the official FARC party, which remains committed to the 2016 agreements.

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