

# *Colombian rebel group ELN invites Duque to resume peace talks*

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Bogota, April 19 (RHC)-- The National Liberation Army (ELN) has asked Colombia's President Ivan Duque to continue negotiating a bilateral ceasefire and expressed its willingness to avoid armed clashes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Although the government froze conversations, we always keep channels open. They have to step in, sit down and talk. There is an urgent need for a ceasefire," the ELN negotiating team head Israel Ramirez said. He also stressed that the Duque administration should not treat paramilitary groups as if they were "private armies."

Previously, in the Catatumbo region, a Colombian army commander said it was necessary "to deploy hitmen" to eliminate the Colombian guerrilla?????.??? Despite these expressions, the ELN maintains communications with international institutions and guarantor countries involved in the peace negotiation process.

Ramirez said: "The ELN is cohesive enough to negotiate peace. We tell them to name their delegates and everything else can be discussed in the negotiations."

The last peace dialogue with the ELN began during the Juan Manuel Santos government in 2017. Two years later, however, Ivan Duque assumed the presidency and froze all negotiations.

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