

Colombia held accountable at UN for enforced disappearances

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UN investigation of disappearances in Colombia?

Bogota, April 20 (RHC)-- Colombia is being examined by the United Nations Committee against Enforced Disappearances (CED) in an online hearing from Geneva, Switzerland, in which the body will review a report from the Colombian State and hear complaints from different social organizations.

The appearance would be the second one attended by the Colombian State as one of the 52 countries which have ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

In October 2016, a commission from the country traveled to Geneva to present its report and, subsequently, to hear the final observations of the body. However, in the opinion of the victims, since that date little has been done by the Colombian State to reduce these crimes.

On the contrary, they have increased significantly, according to the "Alternate Report on the Colombian State's compliance with the recommendations made by the Committee", prepared by the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, a civil society entity attached to the CED.

The conclusion reached by the drafters of the report is that "the State has not complied with the recommendations made in 2016, the year in which they suggested advancing in the investigations so that there is no impunity," said Adriana Arboleda, spokesperson for the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and the National Movement of Victims of State Crimes (Movice).

According to the National Center of Historical Memory, between 1958 and the first half of 2020, the armed conflict left a total of 80,582 people forcibly disappeared in Colombia, of which 85 percent are men, 11.5 percent are women and for the remaining 3.5 percent there is no information on their sex.

However, the situation also affects foreigners of different nationalities, which has raised the alarm of Movice and the Working Group on Forced Disappearances, which brings together several social organizations.

In the last two years, 376 cases of foreigners (of which 216 are Venezuelan) victims of forced disappearance in Colombia have been registered, which is why the report submitted to the Committee insists that "special attention must be paid to the situation at the borders".

According to investigations reported by the organizations, Venezuelans are not the only ones affected, but also Haitians, Cubans and even Africans who illegally transit through Colombia to reach other countries, but who disappear in departments such as Norte de Santander (northeast, bordering Venezuela), Nariño (southwest, bordering Ecuador) and Antioquia (northwest).

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