

Colombia's FARC Pledges Not to Recruit Fighters Under 17



Bogotá, February 13 (RHC-EFE) -- The Colombian government and FARC rebels on Thursday wrapped up a new round of peace talks with the announcement that the guerrillas will not recruit people younger than 17, prompting Bogotá's team to demand that the group demobilize the minors already in its ranks.

The FARC announced that it increased the age threshold for people joining the group from 15 to 17 so that "fewer... young people (will be) involved in a military confrontation," according to a communique read to reporters on Thursday by the group's main negotiator, Ivan Marquez.

Marquez also denied allegations that the FARC had forcefully recruited minors.

The government delegation headed by Humberto de la Calle reacted favorably to the FARC announcement, but demanded that the guerrillas exclude any minors who are currently within their ranks.

The parties said in a joint communique that during the round of talks that ended Thursday, they managed to move forward on "establishing operating guidelines and rules" for the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms.

The next round of peace talks will begin on February 24th.

The parties will be discussing the point on the agenda pertaining to reparations to the victims of the conflict.

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