

# *FARC Denounces Corruption Ahead of Local Elections in Colombia*

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Bogota, July 31 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Leftist guerrillas from the FARC Thursday denounced extreme corruption in Colombia's electoral process, including the existence of many candidates linked to criminal groups and drug traffickers. In a statement, the rebels urged the government to implement changes in the country's electoral system ahead of the next regional elections, scheduled for October 25.

"We consider it to be urgent to fight for changes in the electoral system and present innovative proposals that can collect the feelings of outsiders, filling with audacity each space of the national life," the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia said in statement. "It is time to stop believing in corrupted politicians and all their pledges, all their demagoguery, and time to get involved in social justice and the normalization of national life," they added.

The guerrilla group expressed concern that the many complaints of corruption could stain the next local elections. The complaints allege that many approved candidates were "newcomers and people well-known for their links with drug-trafficking mafias and paramilitary groups, whose main source of power is clientelism, trafficking of votes and influences, fraud, compromises with criminal leaders, among other

crimes.”

The statement quotes various studies that reveal at least 140 mayoral and gubernatorial candidates in 19 of Colombia’s 33 departments are allegedly linked to criminal organizations or had committed electoral crimes to win previous elections. Institutional decay and crisis of regime in Colombia is a reality that cannot be answered with indifference and resignation, the statement concluded.

The FARC and the Colombian government have been engaged in peace negotiations since November 2012 in order to bring the country’s five-decade internal conflict to an end. Political participation and reform is one of the key points up for debate. On Saturday, the Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos ordered the country’s military to halt airstrikes against rebel camps. The measure came a few days after the FARC announced a unilateral cease-fire in order to accelerate the peace talks.

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