

FARC and Government Declare Permanent Ceasefire in Colombia



Havana, August 29 (RHC)-- The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, FARC-EP, has announced a permanent ceasefire following a peace deal reached last week between the rebel group and the government. FARC leader Timoleón Jiménez said in the Cuban capital of Havana on Sunday that the fighters will cease hostilities from midnight local time (05:00 GMT Monday).

Speaking before a sea of reporters armed with cameras and microphones, Jiménez -- also known as Timochenko-- said: "Never again will parents be burying their sons and daughters killed in the war." Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos also declared that the military would cease attacks on the FARC beginning Monday.

After nearly four years of negotiations to put an end to the country's five decades of insurgency, the two sides eventually reached "a final, full and definitive accord ... on ending the conflict and building a stable and enduring peace," in Havana last Wednesday.

The peace agreement will be formally signed in the next few weeks and would be put to a vote in a national referendum on Sunday, October 2 for final approval. After it was signed, FARC's estimated 7,000 fighters will begin handing over their weapons to United Nations observers during six months and reintegrate into civilian life.

Under the deal, the rebel group will formally end its existence as a guerrilla army and transform into an unarmed political movement. The rebel group, which took up weapons in 1964 to fight against deep economic and social inequalities, now controls large areas of Latin America's third most-populous country.

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