

# *Colombian Rebels Say Constituent Assembly Is Solution to Peace*

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Bogota, October 5 (RHC)-- The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army, FARC-EP, has called on the government of President Juan Manuel Santos to organize a National Constituent Assembly, as they had argued at the end of peace negotiations when the government imposed a plebiscite instead.

“Considering how strikingly Colombian society is fractured,” said the FARC-EP in a statement, it is “urgent” to convoke a “large and democratic” constituent assembly, including the other rebel groups: the National Liberation Army and the Popular Army of Liberation.

“As the 'easy way' dreamt up by Santos -- and imposed on us at the end of the negotiations -- suffered a crucial electoral and political setback,” the agreements of Havana will be implemented via the “hard way,” added the communique.

Refusing to analyze what the results mean politically for Santos' administration, the FARC-EP added that “it will be up to his advisers and ministers to... make the relevant decisions in order to maintain and continue the peace process with the FARC-EP, in addition to what was announced with the ELN.

Santos, they recalled, won the presidential election with this promise to bring the “whole” Colombian society to peace. The statement insists that the deal is legitimate, obtained on the one hand with the support of the international community, and on the other with the support of millions of Colombians who voted in favor of the peace deal.

These voters “understood all the generous gestures for peace given by the FARC-EP, as well as the apologies of the war misfortunes that occurred during the conflict.”

This legitimacy, undermined by “(former President Alvaro) Uribe, with the support of a militarist sector of the armed forces, the political and religious oligarchy,” implies that the entire agreement “cannot be modified, because it would lose validity,” while going back to war cannot be a solution either, added the rebels.

Former Senator Piedad Cordoba also advocated for a National Constituent Assembly, saying the plebiscite was necessary to show the sectors opposed to the peace deal, and to reflect on the errors. She said: “It probably won't be possible to agree on a Constituent Assembly this year nor the following, but I believe we should look at this for the medium term,” adding that the assembly would “allow us to renew our institutions, leadership and fundamentally, peace in the country.”

Commenting on the results of the plebiscite, she noted that many voters in urban areas “don't have any empathy for the war affecting the most remote regions, neither for the pain suffered there. Despite their pain, the people want the war to end.”

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