

ELN Ready for Bilateral Cease-Fire with Colombian Government



Bogota, June 20 (RHC)-- Four months after peace talks began in neighbouring Ecuador, a commander of the Colombian National Liberation Army, the ELN, says the rebel forces are ready to sign a truce with Colombia's government.

Bernardo Tellez told Contagio Radio that both sides have been working on the negotiations and a bilateral cease-fire would pave the way for the rest of the discussions to take place in a better environment.

"We put the issue on the table with the aspiration that it can be addressed as soon as possible. In that sense, letters and pronouncements have been received from various social sectors for both delegations. We believe that the table will take into account the recommendations. It is an urgent and necessary issue to advance the process," said Tellez.

The commander also says the ELN is prepared to discuss issues such as kidnappings and illegal detentions carried out by its fighters as well as humanitarian relief for civilians caught up in the armed conflict. He said the group has insisted on the need for a bilateral cease-fire since the talks entered their public phase in February.

The ELN is Colombia's second-largest guerrilla group, after the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC. The FARC signed a peace agreement with the government last November.

Bogota would like to see a deal agreed with the ELN before the presidential election in May 2018 but the group has said it will not be rushed.

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