

Pope Francis Begins Six-Day Visit to Colombia



Bogota, September 7 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has begun his six-day tour of Colombia, amid the country's push for peace, which he is set to promote.

The 80-year-old pontiff's flight landed Wednesday at the Catam military air base in Bogota after it was diverted en route from Rome by Hurricane Irma. He was greeted by President Juan Manuel Santos, his wife and several groups of children and victims of the internal conflict.

The pontiff will encourage reconciliation as Colombians prepare to receive 7,000 former FARC fighters into society and repair divisions after a war that killed more than 220,000 people and displaced millions over five decades.

The Pope's visit comes as the National Liberation Army reached a ceasefire agreement with the government just days before his arrival.

Speaking to reporters on board his plane before his arrival, Pope Francis said the trip was "a bit special because it is being made to help Colombia to go forward on its path to peace."

His visit begins in the Colombian capital and he will travel later in the week to the cities of Villavicencio, Medellin and Cartagena. Pope Francis is making his 20th foreign trip since becoming pontiff in 2014 and

his fifth to his native Latin America, which will last until Sunday, September 10.

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