

FARC's Ivan Marquez boycotts Colombian congressional seat



Bogota, July 18 (RHC)-- Former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) commander, Ivan Marquez says he will not take his seat as national senator this week to protest the arrest of his former-guerrilla colleague, Jesus Santrich. Marquez says the detention of Santrich betrays and puts into jeopardy the 2016 Colombian peace agreement.

Marquez said in public statement published that he will not take office as a congressman on July 20 due to "insurmountable" reasons. In his communique, Marquez says his fellow former FARC leader, Jesus Santrich, is being judicially entrapped by Colombia's attorney general and the U.S. DEA to sabotage the peace agreement. He says this move puts the "peace process into a life and death" situation.

On April 9th, Colombian President Manuel Santos announced Santrich's arrest, claiming he helped to arrange the shipment of 10 tons of cocaine to the United States. Authorities are seeking extradition of the senator-elect.

Santrich denies the charge and calls the extradition a "legal set-up." "There is no will to comply with the essential tenets of the agreement, such as the Political Reform which serves to transition (parties) from armed rebellion to legal politics," Marquez said via social media. "Five years after the first partial land agreement was approved the peasants who currently own the land have not yet received formal titles," he added.

The abstaining senator says that the Special Justice for Peace is "blurring" the final accord signed in Havana, which has been modified to appease interests who were not involved in the peace-building process that took at least five years to solidify.

Marquez also says that the government is not fulfilling its end of the political reforms it pledged to uphold in the agreement. He and nine other ex-leaders of the disarmed FARC were to be sworn as senators this Friday, filling the 10 congressional seats guaranteed to the Revolutionary Alternative Force of the Commons party (also known as FARC) as part of Colombia's Agreement To End Conflict And Build Peace. The agreement with the Manuel Santos administration supposedly ended a civil conflict that had left 220,000 dead and millions displaced over the past five decades.

The agreement gives the FARC party 10 seats in Congress until 2026. As part of the agreement, the government pledged to protect social leaders whose lives were put at risk after the FARC disarmed and receded from rural areas. In just two years the Santos administration has failed to protect the lives of over 300 land and human rights activists who have been killed by paramilitary groups, and even military members.

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