

# *United Nations says protect ex-FARC members or risk losing peace in Colombia*

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United Nations, June 17 (RHC)-- A statement released by the United Nations says that the incessant slaughter of ex-combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is a threat to the nation's peace process.

The murder of Dimar Torres Arevalo outside of a National Army Camp in April triggered a call for justice from both the U.N. special rapporteur and the Work Group on Enforced Disappearances.

"This attack is a challenge for the peace process since it does not comply with the Final Agreement that requires respect for the lives of all ex-combatants who lay down their arms. Therefore, it is a violation of the guarantees agreed by Colombia," an official statement said.

According to the United Nations, members of Torres Arevalo's community notified six independent experts of the man's disappearance and the state military's apparent disinterest in the case or his whereabouts. A fresh grave, three shovels, and the Torres's remains were later found near the military base.

Along the Venezuelan border, Torres was making his way home after leaving his village to buy tools when police officers shot and killed him at an army checkpoint. Witnesses at the scene say police tried to blame the shooting on Torres, saying he reached for an officer's weapon. However, after villagers of the Carrizal community stumbled on the grave, authorities took responsibility for the death.

U.N. officials denounced the compounding number of deaths and demanded the state take action to investigate this case and others. Colombia must "cease inciting violence against demobilized individuals" and realize the important role the nation must play to protect ex-combatants and their families and see perpetrators are brought to justice.

"Ignoring guarantees pledged to former rebel fighters increases the prospect of them deserting the peace and reintegration process and the possibility of them joining dissident groups or taking up arms again to protect themselves," the U.N. warned, adding that "the government must take immediate steps to implement the peace accords."

The Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (Ohchr) presented its annual 2018 report on March 14, stating that President Ivan Duque will have a "historic responsibility to continue implementing the Agreement."

As the Colombian defense budget increased by more than five percent, the Human Rights body encouraged Duque's government to prioritize public spending on prevention, since the U.N.'s Secretary-General estimated that prevention measures could reduce costs generated by violence and conflicts by up to 30 percent.

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