

# *Colombian President Apologizes for Serious Crime at Palace of Justice 30 Years Ago*

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Bogo

Santos acted in compliance with a ruling issued in 2014 by the Inter American Court of Human Rights, under which the relatives of the victims must be compensated through public recognition of mistakes committed by the Government of the time.

During a ceremony organized at the headquarters of the Judiciary, Santos cited government flaws in its mission to protect the population.

The State violated the duty to respect and guarantee the rights to life, personal freedom and integrity, he said before relatives of the dead and the disappeared.

Santos also criticized arbitrary detention, torture and cruel treatment, extra-judicial executions, all linked to the actions of November 6-7, 1985 which are known as the Palace of Justice siege.

In his speech, Santos also admitted delays in the process of investigation and location of the bodies of those still disappeared, and the concealing of evidence, among other mistakes.

After expressing his sympathies to the relatives of the victims, Santos vowed to give a boost to the investigations into the bloody episode.

A moral debt to the victims and their relatives still persists and it must be settled with significant advances in the criminal investigations, the condemnation of those responsible, the establishment of the fate of the disappeared and of the whole truth, he said.

On November 6, 1985, members of the guerrilla group M-19, already demobilized, stormed and took over the Palace of Justice, which was recovered by Army troops the following day amid fierce clashes.

The Inter American Court of Human Rights held the government responsible for excessive use of force at the time, despite the calls to ceasefire made by magistrates and other eye witnesses, who trusted the possibility of a negotiation between the parties.

The process went to international courts in view of delays and indolence of Colombian courts, recalled other speakers in the ceremony.

Lawyer Jorge Molano requested officially the Accusation Commission of the Congress of the Republic to open an investigation as soon as possible against ex president Belisario Betancourt for having failed to adopt measures to prevent the events.

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