
Colombia: Murders of Human Rights Activists Continue, Report

17/08/2015



A new study is calling upon the Colombian government to defend the rights of the “ignored ones” of society, who are often viewed as just nameless statistics.

?Crimes perpetrated against human rights activists have not stopped despite the peace talks started over two years ago to end a conflict that lasted over half a century, according to an investigation reported by press agency EFE on Sunday.

During the first semester of 2015, already 34 activists have been killed – 30 men and four women. Nine of the victims were indigenous people, four were from the LGBT and intersex communities, two were journalists, and three farmers. These groups along with other mining or student union leaders were targeted said the report by non-profit organization Somos Defensores, which will be released on Tuesday.

This latest figure represents a 15 percent increase compared to the 30 activists killed during the first semester of 2014.

Most of the murders were committed in the southern regions of Caqueta and Valle del Cauca.

“We will continue to repeat that in such an important and historical political context, where priority is to find peace, social and human rights activists and leaders in these territories are still not valued in a way they should be for the construction of a real democracy,” states the authors of the report.

The report, entitled “The Nobodies,” is named after a poem by Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, which speaks of “ignored ones” of society, the people “who do not have names, but numbers (...) that cost less than the bullet that kills.”

According to the study, this attitude towards the victims’ deaths is reflected by the Colombian government, its

judicial authorities, and "the indifferent country that does not flinch at the perverse daily sacrifice of these men and women."

28 out of the 34 murders have still not found a perpetrator, the report says. For the six other murder cases, two were attributed to the army, two to paramilitary groups, one to a police unit, and one to the Army of National Liberation guerrilla group, also known as ELN.

The report added that out of the 219 homicides of human rights activists committed between January 2009 and June 2013, "95 percent of the cases never passes the preliminary investigation... while only one case resulted in a firm sentence against the criminals."

"A community without leadership has no horizon and a Colombia without organized communities will not build and sustain peace," the authors of the study said.

The group urged the government to stop treating social movement activists "like 'The Nobodies' of region, not caring whether they are dead or alive."
