



AMERICA/COLOMBIA - Colombian Bishops express hope for dialogue with FARC: "It is time for the war to end."

Bogota (Agenzia Fides) – The President of the Colombian Bishops' Conference (CEC), Archbishop Ruben Salazar Gomez of Barranquilla, says that the death of the guerrilla leader Victor Julio Suarez Rojas could mean the opening of a new phase in the dialogue process underway with guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), in an effort to reach a long-awaited peace.

Victor Julio Suarez Rojas, who presented himself with the pseudonym of Jorge Briceno and was known as "Mono Jojoy", was the military leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the oldest guerrilla organization still active in Latin America. Rojas was killed in a military bombing in the southern state of Meta. Twenty guerrillas, all leaders of the FARC, were killed in the military operation. "Mono Jojoy", born in 1953, was one of seven members of FARC's secretariat, the highest authority of the armed group.

With the death of Victor Julio Suarez, "Colombia has rid itself of an executioner," said Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos, broadcasting a message taped in New York, where Santos is attending meetings of the UN General Assembly.

In a document previously sent to Fides and which will later be published on the website of the Colombian Bishops' Conference, the President of the Bishops' Conference offers his responses to journalists who questioned him during the opening of the Expocatólica Colombia 2 in Bogota: "We received the news by asking the Lord that this death, which is a cause for suffering in the sense that it is the death of a Colombian, may make way for the beginning of a negotiation process with the FARC. With this death, the hope is that the FARC will now open a process of political dialogue, seeking the reinitiation of peace talks with the government," said Archbishop Salazar Gomez.

"The message is that we need to make peace, because war has done us so much harm. We have had anxiety, pain, loss of life, and now it is time for the war to end. But for this to happen, it is necessary that the FARC change their attitude of war and therefore, accept the basic conditions proposed by the government, which are nothing more than respect for international humanitarian law, in order to start a real peace process," added the President of the Colombian Bishops' Conference. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 24/09/2010)