



AMERICA/COLOMBIA - Landmines: After Afghanistan, Colombia is the nation with the greatest number of victims in the world

Bogotà (Agenzia Fides) – International Day for Mine Awareness will be celebrated on 4 April. The date has been promoted by the General Assembly of the UN to reject the indiscriminate use of these devices and create awareness about the growing threat to people. Under the slogan “For one day try to be in their shoes!”, 15 governmental and non-governmental organisations will seek to raise awareness about this problem in Colombia. After Afghanistan, Colombia is the nation with the largest number of victims in the world: in 2010 there were 482 victims of antipersonnel mines; from 1990 to February 2011, there were 9,103 victims of this scourge, including 870 minors, 3,408 civilians and 5,695 military. In this first part of 2011, there are already 71 victims. According to the note sent to Fides by the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, even though these numbers are shocking, the truth is that Colombians experience this reality everyday as if it were perfectly normal, and people are so used to it that they do not seem aware of the gravity of the issue.

So the goal for the this Day is to raise the issue of landmines in schools, universities, offices, restaurants and public places, in order that everyone is aware of the reality facing the Country and to ensure that, at least for one day, it is at the centre of attention. Through social networks all Colombians are invited to participate actively in a symbolic gesture, to roll up their trousers to demonstrate their awareness of the consequences, as experienced by victims of landmines, hit in the lower limbs.

On April 4, there will be a demonstration in the Plaza de Bolívar, at 9.00 am, led by the Vice President of the Republic, Angelino Garzón, who will accompany the military and civilian victims. In the Plaza de Bolívar there will also be a stage built of 9,000 shoes, for each of the victims recorded from 1990 to today. (CE) (Agenzia Fides, 31/03/2011)