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Unidad 6, Almanaque

Paz Colombia

Colombia and FARC to Sign Peace Deal

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After more than 5 decades of bloodshed, there may be a chance for peace in Colombia again. The Colombia government and the Marxist guerillas known as FARC, are due to sign a revised peace deal Thursday to end the conflict that has killed more than 200,000 people and forced millions more Colombians from their homes. Colombia’s president, Juan Manuel Santos, has bet his legacy on the agreement to end a war that he said could not be won militarily.

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Juan Manuel Santos: In our constitution, one of the obligations of every citizen, starting with the president, is to seek peace and some people think that the peace can be achieved by killing the last member of the FARC and that is not possible, and this is not the way.

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At a peace agreement signing in September were government officials and rebels who shared a stage the first time in Colombia. Military planes flew over the crowd and Santos declared that the war was over. But voters had other ideas, many apparently harboring a deep hatred for the FARC rebels. Numerous Colombians said they could not stomach seeing guerilla leaders go free after kidnapping and murdering so many thousands of their fellow citizens. From the negotiating table in Cuba, FARC leaders said they would not accept prison time.

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“We aren’t considering going to jail,” this FARC commander told me. “He who fights for justice doesn’t deserve that. We don’t act like a criminal terrorist group; we have a sacred fight.”

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Despite polls that showed the peace deal would be approved, the voters rejected the agreement by a narrow margin, shocking much of Colombia and the international community that supported peace.

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Dealt a crushing defeat, Santos and the peace deal were revived in October after the Colombian president was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Presenter: …Nobel Peace Prize for 2016 to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos.

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Negotiators restarted talks again in Cuba and struck a bonafide deal that includes provisions for tighter sanctions on FARC members accused of war crimes. Critics of the new deal, like former Colombian President Alvaro Ribé said the government is still giving away too much to the rebels. This time though, the Colombian people will not vote on the deal. perhaps still stinging from the first defeat, Santos will send the updated agreement directly to Congress, saying another referendum would be “too divisive for Colombia.”

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