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FARC urged to end all kidnapping

The announcement by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that it will stop kidnapping for ransom is a positive but insufficient first step, said Amnesty International today.

The organization urged the guerrilla group to put an immediate end to all forms of kidnapping and hostage-taking, as well as to all other human rights abuses such as unlawful killings, the recruitment of children and the use of indiscriminate weapons such as land mines.

In a statement issued by the FARC's leadership, the group also announced it will release 10 members of the security forces it is holding captive.

"The end of kidnapping for ransom by the FARC is welcome if long overdue news. What we want to see now is for the group to start fully respecting all aspects of international humanitarian law," said Marcelo Pollack, Colombia researcher at Amnesty International.

Over the past decades, Amnesty International has documented hundreds of cases of unlawful killings, hostage-taking, forced displacement and the recruitment of children at the hands of guerrilla groups in Colombia, including by the FARC and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

On 9 July, FARC guerrillas detonated a car bomb in the urban centre of Toribío Municipality, Cauca Department, an area inhabited predominantly by Indigenous Peoples. The explosion and fighting between the FARC and the security forces left at least three civilians and a police officer dead and 120 civilians and two police officers injured.

According to government figures, in the first 10 months of 2011, 49 members of the security forces and 20 civilians were killed and hundreds more injured, by anti-personnel mines predominantly deployed by the FARC.

Paramilitary groups and the security forces, either acting alone or in collusion with each other, are also responsible for crimes under international law, including unlawful killings, abductions or enforced disappearances, and forced displacement.