

Francisco Santos – Ambassador of Colombia to the United States



In September 2018, President Iván Duque appointed Francisco Santos Calderón Ambassador of Colombia to the United States. Santos was the 8th Vice President of Colombia.

Prior to being named Ambassador, in 2017, Santos was appointed as the head of national debate by the Democratic Center Party, a position from which he worked toward consolidating the national party at a regional level.

In 2015, Santos ran for Mayor of Bogota on the Democratic Center Party ticket. He created the Fundación Confianza Colombia, promoting democracy and citizen participation in public affairs, as well as developing ideas in the political, economic and social spheres.

Santos served as Vice President of Colombia from 2002 through 2010 during the administration of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez. His policy priorities were the fight against corruption, extortion and kidnapping and ridding the country of anti-personnel mines. As Vice President, Santos also led Colombia's international promotion of trade, investment and tourism.

In March 2000, while working as Assistant Director of the newspaper *El País*, he went into exile in Madrid, Spain, because of threats from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Between 1987 and 1988, he served as night Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper *El Tiempo*. From 1988 to 1989, he was Deputy Editor of the paper. In the late 1980s, Santos also taught journalism and international relations at several Colombian universities, among them, Universidad Central, Universidad Javeriana and Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano.

On September 19, 1990, Santos was kidnapped on orders from drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, remaining in captivity for eight months. He was released on May 20, 1991.

Santos was awarded the Neiman Fellowship at Harvard University and the Paul Harris Medal in 1993, the highest distinction given by Rotary International.

In 1993, he promoted the Anti-Kidnapping Statute, pioneer tool for the Colombian justice with regard to the thousands of victims of kidnapping in the country. It resulted in the first and, to date, only law in Colombia proposed and tabled by public petition via signature collection.

He founded the first non-governmental organization against kidnapping in the world, Fundación País Libre.

He completed his studies in the United States at the University of Kansas and the University of Texas, earning degrees in Journalism and Latin-American Studies, respectively.

Born on October 14, 1961 in Bogota, married Maria Victoria García and has four children: Benjamin, Gabriel, Carmen and Pedro.