

 PEACE MAIL

September 6-12, 2016

FARC begins releasing minors within its ranks

On Saturday, September 10th, the FARC guerilla group began releasing child soldiers to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the first such act since the May 15th agreement to do so between the GOC and FARC negotiators in Havana.¹ Five more children were released later that same afternoon, with more such exchanges expected to eventually follow.² As noted in the Joint Communiqué #97 from the negotiating team in Havana,³ the transfer teams will comprise representatives from the ICRC and two delegates from social organizations. Once the children have been identified and evaluated for immediate health concerns, a reception team of representatives from UNICEF - with IOM support - will receive the minors. Although exact statistics are unknown on the number of children who remain within the FARC, more than 6,000 children have disengaged from illegal armed groups in Colombia over the last 14 years, with 60% of those exiting from the FARC.⁴

ELN announces “armed strike” September 12-15

The ELN guerrilla group announced that an armed strike would take place in six departments in Colombia: Arauca, Boyacá, Casanare, Santander, Norte de Santander and Vichada. This strike began at 6:00am on Monday the 12th and restricts any transport, commerce, and related activities for 72 hours in order to commemorate the 36 year anniversary of the Domingo Latin front. While the guerrillas encouraged civilians to enjoy time with their families at home, the ELN also warned that they would “act against those who sabotage or ignore the strike order.” The Office of the Ombudsman notes that the situation is particularly troubling in the department of Arauca, where ELN presence is strongest, and where four violent acts have occurred over the last two weeks.⁵ Nariño also received a notice that an armed strike led by the ELN will begin on Wednesday the 14th.⁶ The ELN and the GOC established an agenda for peace talks on March 30th, but have not advanced in the talks due to unmet demands on both sides.