

 PEACE MAIL

August 30-September 5, 2016

### **Delayed release of child soldiers a “bilateral decision”**

After repeated calls from international and national organizations to release all children within the FARC ranks, the guerrilla organization’s official delegation in Havana announced last Tuesday that the delayed release of the minors reflects a bilateral decision between the FARC and the GOC.<sup>1</sup> Public calls for the minors’ release intensified after inaction following the May 15<sup>th</sup> accord between the FARC and the GOC to hand over all FARC members under the age of 15, who would all be classified as victims of the armed conflict upon their release. The August 29<sup>th</sup> announcement first suggested that the children will demobilize along with the rest of the FARC members, though they will receive tailored attention in the transitional zones, along with differential reintegration services. By Friday, however, the 96<sup>th</sup> Joint Communiqué from Havana clarified that UNICEF will begin receiving the children on September 10<sup>th</sup>, transferring them to temporary housing until they enter into the charge of GOC institutions.<sup>2</sup>

### **Further plebiscite details emerge**

The signing of the peace accord will occur on September 26<sup>th</sup> in the Caribbean port city of Cartagena de Indias, with the plebiscite following on six days later.<sup>3</sup> Last Tuesday, President Santos released the question for the October 2<sup>nd</sup> plebiscite vote: Do you support the Final Accord for ending the conflict and building stable and sustainable peace?<sup>4</sup> Aggressive campaigning for both “yes” and “no” votes continues. Despite a previous law released earlier this year stating that public officials would not be allowed to use state resources for plebiscite campaigns (Law 1806), President Juan Manuel Santos noted on Monday that, according to the wording of the legislation, public officials indeed may use state resources for their campaigns as long as they are resources *equally available to all officials*, and that their use does not impede normal work responsibilities.<sup>5</sup>