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FARC and GOC review protocol for releasing children under 15 years of age

On Sunday, the FARC and GOC delegations in Havana reviewed the proposed protocol for releasing children less than 15 years of age from FARC camps, developed over the past weeks by a Technical Committee led by the National Ombudsman's Office and the President's Advisory Office on Human Rights, with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNICEF, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The FARC claim they have between 20 and 25 children 15 years of age or younger¹, which contrasts with a GOC estimate of 170 children.² The plan is to release children before the final agreement is signed, which would be an historic event. The Technical Committee is also developing a protocol for the release of all remaining children under 18.³

ELN claims to have reduced kidnappings, calls on GOC to begin formal talks

The release last week of three journalists kidnapped by the ELN guerrilla group, including Spanish journalist Salud Hernandez, highlights the continued practice of kidnapping by the group. President Santos has stated that the ELN must cease kidnappings and release all hostages before formal peace talks can begin, announced at the end of March. In a statement this week, ELN leader Gabino reiterated that the ELN view as a condition unilaterally imposed by President Santos after the agenda was mutually agreed upon. The ELN claim they have "always been clear" that kidnappings should be kept to a minimum, and that the group has actually reduced kidnappings recently, but civil society is unaware of this because they are 'manipulated' by the media.⁴ The GOC has insisted that the ELN cease kidnapping since the formal talks were first announced on March 30.⁵