

PEACE MAIL

March 6-12

WEEKLY UPDATE: Implementing the Peace Accords

This callout box includes a weekly update on releases and work specifically related to implementing the Final Peace Accord between the Government (GOC) and the FARC in Colombia.

On 8 March, leader of the FARC Rodrigo Londoño, alias Timochenko, officially announced his withdrawal from the presidential campaign, citing health concerns and the lack of security guarantees.¹ **The FARC went on to obtain only 0.34 percent of the vote in the legislative elections on 11 March**, but will nevertheless begin its political life with the 10 seats agreed in the Peace Accord. According to the last survey carried out by Semana magazine, 85 percent of respondents have an unfavorable image of the FARC, and only 6 percent think well of its leader.² This lack of support suggests that Colombians are unwilling to allow the former guerrilla leaders to participate in politics until they have told the truth and paid their dues for more than 50 years of armed conflict, allaying fears of their political dominance harbored by many Colombians.

The legislative elections held on 11 March were hailed by the GOC as the most peaceful and transparent in 50 years, and the abstention rate of 51 percent nevertheless represented an increase in the number of Colombians voting by 5 percent as compared to 2014.³ The Centro Democrático maintained its position as the primary political force in the country, with 19 seats in the Senate, and 32 in the House of Representatives. They were followed by Cambio Radical (with 16 in the Senate and 30 in the House), and the Conservative Party (with 15 in both the Senate and the House). The strength of these parties, which have historically expressed their disagreement with the Peace Accord with the FARC, will continue to make its implementation difficult.⁴ In addition, and despite a shortage of ballot papers for the presidential consultations, the candidate for the right, Iván Duque, personally won over 4 million votes, which could indicate a first-round win for him in the presidential elections on 27 May.⁵

The ELN fulfilled their promise to suspend armed actions over the election period, and on 12 March President Santos instructed his chief negotiator, Gustavo Bell, to travel to Quito and resume the 5th Round of talks. According to Santos, the resumption of talks will begin with the discussion of two simultaneous points: citizens' participation, and humanitarian actions, as well as a move towards a new broad and verifiable ceasefire.⁶ The ELN has also expressed its desire to return to the negotiating table, and claims that this is best done with a bilateral ceasefire in place.⁷ The announcements may have a pacifying effect on the presidential elections on 27 May, given that violent actions not only affect Colombians' security, but also contribute to political polarization.