

WEEKLY UPDATE: June 18 – 24

This callout box includes a weekly update on news and work specifically related to implementing the Peace Accord between the Government of Colombia (GOC) and the FARC-EP.

The ex-combatant from FARC's party, Anderson Perez Osorio was murdered on June 17 in the Caloto municipality of Cauca department, prompting his FARC party to issue a statement on June 18 condemning the lack of action by the government. **In an open letter to President Iván Duque, Rodrigo Londoño said the cases highlighted the lack of protection of FARC members by authorities.** Since the signing of the agreements in 2016, former FARC members have been facing persecution by right-wing elements and hitmen all over Colombia, being killed at alarming rates despite having laid down their arms in search of peace. Including Osorio, 136 ex-combatants have been killed<sup>1</sup>

The recent murders of at least three FARC members undergoing the reincorporation process has raised further scrutiny on the **role of Iván Duque's government in providing security measures for former guerrillas.** The killings came less than a fortnight after the United Nations urged the Colombian government to stop 'inciting violence' against the FARC. The FARC has repeatedly called on the Colombian government to uphold the peace agreement, a position backed by the UN and many foreign governments. Following the murders of at least three FARC members between 13 and 17 June, the FARC called on the international community, including political organizations and social movements, 'to demand immediate and effective measures from President Duque which are capable of putting a definitive end to this bloodshed'<sup>2</sup>.

The prestigious magazine The Economist summarized the challenges that faces the Government of Ivan Duque, "**Mr Duque's main challenge is to develop clear policies of his own.** They should start with security. Much of the countryside remains unsafe. Some 135 demobilized guerrillas have been murdered. Community leaders are also being killed. Colombia needs to rethink security policy for a post-FARC era, with greater use of intelligence and civilian co-operation"<sup>3</sup>

Venezuela's crisis is spilling across the border into Colombia as rebels and right-wing paramilitaries recruit migrants to strengthen their ranks. Five military commanders told Reuters that as many as **30% of insurgents in Colombia's eastern border region are Venezuelans,** willing to take up arms in return for food and pay. The head of Colombia's military and government spokesman on this issue, General Luis Fernando Navarro, told Reuters that armed groups were targeting Venezuelans because they were easier to recruit than Colombians. At the last official count by military intelligence in May, there were 2,296 FARC dissident combatants and 2,402 fighters from the ELN in Colombia. Including their urban offshoots, the two groups total nearly 8,400 members<sup>4</sup>.

Indigenous leader Carlos Biscué was murdered in the **southern region of Cauca, the most dangerous region of Colombia for social activists since the signing of the peace agreement.** More than 100 indigenous leaders, human rights defenders, trade unionists and FARC former guerrillas have been killed there<sup>5</sup>. The latest killing comes amid national outrage over the murder in Córdoba of María Del Pilar Hurtado, who was killed after receiving paramilitary death threats. Del Pilar is one of more than 600 community leaders and human rights defenders who have been assassinated since 2016

Colombia's State Council ordered the Defense Ministry to **prevent human rights violations in army operations amid concerns that army orders could revive the mass killing of innocent civilians.** The high court ordered the Ministry to "ensure that all directives and operations undertaken by the armed forces respect International Human Rights, International Humanitarian Law and International Armed Conflict rules". They also asked for the application of international norms allowing for relevant authorities to investigate any alleged violations "effectively, quickly, fully and impartially."<sup>6</sup>