

PEACE MAIL

June 14-20, 2016

Peace negotiations with FARC to conclude by July 20: President Santos

President Santos announced July 20 as an estimated date for concluding the peace negotiations with the FARC, which have been ongoing for over three years in Havana. The announcement was made in a meeting with leaders of Congress and political party representatives.¹ In response, FARC leader ‘Timochenko’ cautioned against setting deadlines, stating that progress is being made but that setting dates only damages the process, especially when those dates are not mutually agreed upon.² The parties are currently discussing the final agenda points related to ending the conflict and a popular referendum on the final agreement, the mechanism for which must still be approved by the Constitutional Court. In addition, reports indicate that an announcement could be made this Thursday on a bilateral ceasefire and the temporary concentration sites while the FARC lays down their arms.³

Congress approves Legislative Act for Peace, a ‘judicial shield’ for the final peace agreement

On June 14, Colombia’s Congress approved the Legislative Act for Peace, a legally binding measure for the incorporation of the final peace agreement with the FARC into the country’s constitution. This provides a ‘judicial shield’ to ensure that the peace deal signed by the parties cannot be subsequently changed.⁴ The act will "allow for the implementation of the agreements that are signed in Havana and serves to solidify these agreements legally and politically," according to Colombia’s Minister of the Interior Juan Fernando Cristo.⁵ The legislative act will now be submitted to the Constitutional Court for final approval, and will only enter into force following a popular referendum on the peace agreement.⁶

Civil society urges ELN to end kidnapping

Dozens of Colombian NGOs and activists sent a letter to the ELN on June 16, calling on the guerrilla group to cease kidnappings. Signatories include think tanks, victim organizations and leftist organizations.⁷ Soon after the agenda for formal peace negotiations with the ELN was announced in March, President Santos established the precondition that the ELN halt kidnappings and release all hostages before the talks can begin. The group has been refusing to end the practice, and kidnappings have continued. As the activists and NGOs state in the letter, “if the ELN uses society as a reference in negotiations, as it has said on numerous occasions, it cannot remain deaf to the demands of society to bring an end, once and for all, to this condemnable behavior.”⁸