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INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION
FOR MIGRATION

PEACE MAIL

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WEEKLY UPDATE: Implementing the Peace Accords

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

One year after its formation, the FARC political party held a three-day meeting of their leadership body, the Council of the Commons, over 31 August to 2 September. Following their meeting, the political collective again expressed their concerns with the new government, the implementation of the Peace Accord, and the violent deaths of 75 former combatants since December 2016. The group also warned that party members who did not follow its directives would not enjoy the party's unconditional support.¹ Only 82 of the Council's 111 elected members attended the obligatory plenary session, with Iván Márquez, 'El Paisa,' and Henry Castellanos' absence being of particular note, their whereabouts being unknown.² Their absence has been taken as evidence of the growing ruptures within the FARC leadership, and has led some to speculate that they have abandoned the peace process.³ President Iván Duque requested the extension of the United Nations' Verification Mission in Colombia for a further year, to ensure the implementation of the Peace Accord with the FARC.⁴

On 30 August, the JEP **held a hearing with 11 members of the Armed Forces in Casanare accused of 13 cases of extrajudicial killings** between 2006 and 2007. The cases occurred during the 'false positives' scandal, and were falsely reported as combat deaths. The accused confirmed their commitment to appearing before the JEP, to clarifying the truth, and to the reparation of victims. One defendant, Major Gustavo Soto Bracamonte, has already been sentenced to 30 years prison by the ordinary justice system.⁵

The *Rodeemos la Paz* organization presented the Commission for Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition with their **recommendations for engaging victims of the armed conflict living abroad** (refugees and exiles) this week.⁶ Studies show that Colombia is the Latin American country with the most citizens forcibly living abroad, with more than half a million refugees.⁷

The ELN announced its willingness to release the 19 hostages under its control this week, including the nine people who were kidnapped a month ago in Chocó and Arauca.⁸ The guerrilla group also released two hostages under the age of 18 from the U'wa indigenous community to the Ombudsperson's Office and the Episcopal Conference of Colombia's humanitarian commission in Arauca on 3 September, stating that this was the first step in the liberation of the other civilians and members of the public forces in their power. The guerrilla group denounced the public forces' use of youngsters from the Indigenous U'wa community to carry out intelligence.⁹ President Iván Duque has continuously demanded the release of hostages as a prerequisite for the eventual resumption of peace talks, which have been suspended since the end of their Sixth Round on 1 August, pending an evaluation by Duque's government. The President is due to announce a decision before 7 September.