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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.

Doubts over the FARC leadership's commitment to the peace process arose this week following a report issued by the UN Verification Mission on 6 September. The report outlines concerns about six FARC leaders who have abandoned their positions in four Territorial Training and Reincorporation Spaces (ETCR) and one New Regrouping Point (NPR), leaving approximately 1,500 former combatants without proper leadership. In this, they have failed to fulfil article 3.3 of the Peace Accord to “actively contribute to the success of the reincorporation process.”¹ The report prompted a response from Fabián Ramírez, once second-in-command of the FARC's Southern Block, who reaffirmed his commitment, despite having lost confidence in the State after the capture of Jesús Santrich.² Those missing include Iván Márquez, Hernán Velásquez (alias el Paisa), and Henry Castellanos (alias Romaña),³ the former having declined to take up his seat in Congress in July. His seat, and that of Jesús Santrich, will remain valid until their “political death” is officially declared.³

Divisions within the FARC were also highlighted on 10 September, with two former leaders of the guerrilla group signing a letter directed to the FARC plenary session, in which they criticized the leadership of Rodrigo Londoño and called for the implementation of a more Marxist-style politics.⁴

The Administrative Director of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and two lawyers belonging to the Executive Secretariat have been called for questioning by the Attorney General's Office following suspected irregularities. Administrative Director Marta Lucia Zamora is responsible for contracting and logistics for hearings, visits, and workshops carried out by JEP magistrates around the country.⁵

On 5 September, the **ELN released three police officers who were kidnapped in Arauca** at the beginning of August as a show of good will towards resuming peace negotiations.⁶ The release came two days before the deadline for the GOC's evaluation of the peace talks, and for the ELN's release of a further six hostages taken in the Chocó in August. The period lapsed, however, with the two sides in a deadlock over the release of these and 16 further hostages,⁷ a condition which the ELN finds unacceptable given their position as an insurgent movement negotiating structural change in Colombia.⁸ The guerrilla group also accused the President of ignorance of achievements made so far, and of endangering the hostages' lives by not seeking a protocol for their release. The High Commissioner for Peace, on the other hand, interpreted the 30 armed actions carried out by the ELN over the past 30 days as evidence of the ELN's failure to recognize the GOC's willingness to negotiate.⁹

Víctor David Segura Palacios, alias “David,” was captured during an intelligence operation carried out by the Police and Navy in Nariño on 8 September. “David” joined the FARC in 2004 and was one of the first to reject the peace process, instead taking on the leadership of the “United Guerrillas of the Pacific” in 2016. He is suspected of working with the Mexican cartel “New Generation,” and is held responsible for the displacement of more than 500 people and the kidnapping of 11 police officers working on the eradication of illicit crops in Nariño. Much of this violence took place in the context of an ongoing territorial war with Walter Patricio Arizala, alias “Guacho.” He will likely face extradition to the United States, along with several others captured for drug trafficking.¹⁰