



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.

Ten days from the deadline, intense **debates regarding President Duque's possible veto of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace's (JEP) Statutory Law** continued this week. While the Attorney General outlined five reasons in favor, the Inspector General warned a veto would be unconstitutional, as the Law was created through the "fast track" mechanism, with constitutional checks. If Duque vetoes the Law, his concerns will be reviewed by the Senate, and the relevant regulations will either be removed from the legislative text, or it will be returned unchanged to him for obligatory approval.¹ **Duque's party has shown continued commitment to changing the Peace Accord**, with reduced budgets and a lack of specific funding for peace mechanisms (including the JEP, Truth Commission, and Missing Persons' Search Unit) in the National Development Plan 2018-2022, near-constant attacks against the JEP, and reticence towards integrated rural reform² and crop substitution all challenging its legitimacy.³

"Pastor Alape" was the third FARC leader after Rodrigo Londoño and Pablo Catatumbo to appear before the JEP to give his evidence in Case 001 on illegal retentions on 25 February. Thirty-one FARC leaders are scheduled to give evidence before 27 March, and are expected to clarify what happened in 6,162 cases, which include extortive kidnappings, disappearances, and murders. However, the process does not amount to a hearing at this stage, and the 31 are not obliged to accept responsibility for these crimes.⁴ The process of accrediting victims for participation in this case also began this week, with 89 already being registered and assigned a lawyer from the Autonomous Counsel and Defense System. Through this process, victims will be able to give evidence and respond to that given by the 31 FARC leaders in this first "recognition" phase, as well as attend public recognition audiences and comment on inquiries and restorative projects proposed by the FARC later in the process.⁵

The State Council denied Jesús Santrich's application for habeas corpus on 22 February, supporting a previous ruling by the Cundinamarca Administrative Court, and stating that the request should be made before the Attorney General. The JEP is awaiting evidence from the United States before deciding whether the suspected drug trafficking for which Santrich was arrested last April occurred before or after the signing of the Peace Accord.⁶ The case is often cited by FARC leaders as evidence of the lack of legal guarantees offered former combatants.

The **National Reincorporation Council (CNR) approved two further productive projects** for 80 former FARC combatants and their families and communities in Cauca and Guaviare on 25 February, with a budget of US\$645,000. The CNR and the Reincorporation and Normalization Agency (ARN) have approved 185 projects, benefitting 1,600 former combatants.⁷

The 170 municipalities most affected by the armed conflict and prioritized for the implementation of 16 Development Plans with a Territorial Focus (PDET) have now formulated their projects for the implementation of the Peace Accord. During the process, the Territorial Renovation Agency (ART) has brought together more than 200,000 local social, government, and business representatives, who put forward more than 33,000 initiatives to stabilize and transform their territories and build peace over the next 10 years. These projects, which will benefit 6.6 million people, primarily address rural education and early childhood, economic revival and agricultural and livestock production, infrastructure and land adaptation, drinking water, rural healthcare, reconciliation, coexistence, and peace.⁸ However, decisions need to be made as to which and how many projects will be formulated and executed this year, what resources will be allocated to them, and from which sources.⁹

"Pablo Arauca," the ELN leader suspected of orchestrating the 17-January attack on a police academy in Bogotá which killed 22 cadets, appeared in a video released on 25 February. He reaffirmed the guerrilla group's willingness to negotiate, called for security protocols to be respected, and reiterated that the police academy was a legitimate target. He also rejected President Duque's suggestions that the ELN is responsible for the assassination of social leaders, claiming that the revolutionary movement rather defends the right to social leadership. He also rejected any Colombian military intervention in Venezuela. An Interpol Red Notice was issued against him in October 2018.¹⁰