



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.

The Disappeared Persons Search Unit (UBPD) dedicated the first year of its 20-year mandate to establishing the methodology to be applied in its search for the 126,000 victims of kidnapping, recruitment and forced disappearance in the country. **The Director of the UBPD announced this week that, as of May, its technical teams will begin work in 17 territories of the country.** She also confirmed that this year the UBPD will operate with less funds than initially projected. In fact, only a third of the budget was approved and the entity is not considered in the National Development Plan (PND) currently under debate in Congress. In order to obtain more resources, it may turn to international cooperation.¹

In response to the assassination of a leader who promoted the substitution of illicit crops, Argemiro López Pertuz, on 17 March in Tumaco, Nariño, Emilio Archila, **the Presidential Advisor for Stabilization and Consolidation condemned the crime and reaffirmed the government's commitment to voluntary crop substitution.** He assured that families enrolled in the National Comprehensive Program for the Substitution of Crops for Illicit Use will receive support. Nariño is now the epicenter of illicit crops in the country. For the past 15 years, it has topped the list of departments with the greatest coca cultivation (45,000 hectares by 2017).²

Victims of sexual violence of the FARC have requested that their cases to be taken on by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), asserting that the transitional justice mechanism, as opposed to the ordinary justice system, will allow for the truth to be known and victims repaired. Impunity in the ordinary justice system is 97% of all cases of sexual violence reported in the context of the armed conflict. The request was made in response to the constitutional reform proposal that President Ivan Duque announced on 10 March, in which he objected to the Statutory Law of the JEP and also proposed that sexual violence against minors should fall within the jurisdiction of the ordinary justice system.³

The Constitutional Court declared that it is inhibited from exercising automatic control of its corresponding constitutionality until the procedure in Congress is concluded. **Coming up this week Congress must deal with the six presidential objections to the Statutory Law of the JEP,** and once determined, the Constitutional Court will rule on possible flaws in the procedure and on the material content of the new bill, if there are modifications, before the presidential pronouncement. For its part, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in its 2018 annual report released this week, asked the GOC to adopt the necessary measures to advance in the definition and entry into force of the regulatory framework of the JEP.⁴

Indigenous communities continued over two weeks of protest, blockading a crucial highway in Southwestern Colombia and sparking confrontations with security forces. Over 25 protestors have been wounded and one death has been reported. The GOC has demanded that blockades be lifted and the de facto routes ceased.⁵ Indigenous communities are demanding answers and measures for the assassinations of leaders, as well as 4.6 billion pesos in addition to the 10 billion pesos contemplated in the PND under debate. They are asking Duque to sign an agreement for the allocation of resources for their communities, revision of his proposed reform regarding the use of land for ethnic communities, and protection from fracking in territories that affect their communities. It is estimated that at least 22,000 people are marching for ethnic causes.⁶

Seventeen former chiefs of the Collective of Demobilized Persons of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) have expressed their willingness to collaborate with the Truth Commission and to the National Center for Historical Memory. In the communiqué, the group also recalled their contribution to truth over the past 12 years through the Justice and Peace Law.⁷ In similar news this week, **five former leaders of the AUC were convicted of 471 cases of gender-based violence** perpetrated by men under their command.⁸ Sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict, according to the Attorney General's Office, was an "invisible" phenomenon in the case of the paramilitaries, requiring implementation of strategies with victims for the prosecution of perpetrators.