

1. Overview of developments 2023-2025

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On 24 November 2016, a final peace agreement was signed in Bogotá between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo, FARC-EP) resulting in the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement, officially ending decades of armed conflict with the country's largest Marxist guerrilla group. However, multiple internal armed conflicts persist, and violence remains a serious concern, with an estimated 9 million victims from the long conflict. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz, JEP),⁵ set up as part of the 2016 FARC peace agreement,⁶ has opened several major cases, including crimes by the FARC state forces, paramilitary groups, and the 'false positives' scandal involving over 6 200 civilians killed and falsely labelled as guerrillas. Although around 13 000 – 14 000 FARC-EP members demobilised and 90 % have upheld the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement, over 400 signatories have been killed since 2016—many reportedly by dissident groups. The peace deal also included rural development plans and crop substitution programs, but key commitments, particularly under President Iván Duque's administration (2018–2022), were not fulfilled, contributing to ongoing violence and insecurity.⁷ In August 2022, Gustavo Petro became Colombia's first left-wing president. His administration was elected on a platform promising 'Total Peace' (Paz Total) and garnered support from groups such as Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, teachers, students, trade unions, and the LGBTIQ community. Although Petro's administration has faced significant challenges in fulfilling campaign promises, these groups have continued to support him.⁸ The national government's Total Peace efforts, primarily reflected in the signing of six governmental decrees that established bilateral ceasefires between the government and the Conquering Self Defense Forces of the Sierra Nevada (Autodefensas Conquistadores de la Sierra Nevada, ACSN), Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, AGC⁹), Central General Staff (Estado Mayor Central, EMC), Second Marquetalia (Segunda Marquetalia, SM), Border Commands (Comandos de la Frontera, CF), and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN), resulted in not only persistent armed conflict but in even intensified conflict in some areas of the country.¹⁰ For more information, see [Section 3.3.2](#) on 'Total Peace' Plan.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that, due to the fragmentation and reconfiguration of armed groups, and an unstable situation, they classify that there are currently eight non-international armed conflicts occurring within the country, as of March 2025.¹¹ The most enduring security problem faced by Colombia is the limited reach of the state's control and an absence of any monopoly of violence. Illegal armed groups have operated and

expanded in these regions since the early twentieth century, underpinning the persistence of armed violence in Colombia. Their concentration in areas such as the Pacific coast, eastern plains, Amazon region, southwestern Andes, and border zones, reflects both geographic isolation and their strategic value for illicit economies and conflict-related activities, including cocaine, arms trafficking, and gold. The current dynamics in 2025 illustrate a reconfiguration of violence following the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement, as remaining groups compete to fill the resulting power vacuum.¹² Violence included homicides, forcible recruitment of children and youth, threats and extortion, mobility restrictions, and harm caused by explosive devices, mainly in rural areas.¹³ Patterns of expansion, territorial control, and competition/coexistence between armed and criminal groups continued – mainly the AGC, EMC, SM, and ELN – resulting in armed clashes, security challenges, social control, confinements, and forced displacement. In urban areas, groups have increased their presence via outsourcing to smaller local criminal gangs and organised crime groups in strategic areas, while major cities like Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Sincelejo, and Cúcuta have become 'criminal mobility corridors' for illicit economies, moving drugs, supplies, weapons, and financing to major armed groups.¹⁴ Furthermore, despite having a national democratic framework, violence tends to rise during the periods preceding and following presidential and congressional elections. This trend relates to a phenomenon underlying violence against public officials and social leaders characterised by sources as 'subnational authoritarianism'—that is, the reliance on violent, coercive and hierarchical practices to preserve local political monopolies and control.¹⁵

In the first half of 2025, Colombia experienced a sharp rise in violence related to armed conflict,¹⁶ driven by fragmenting, competing, and expanding criminal and armed groups vying for territory and control over illicit economies,¹⁷ with approximately 1.45 million people affected—over four times more than the same period in 2024.¹⁸ Mass displacement, restrictions on civilian movement, killings, and deaths from violence were also on the rise.¹⁹ Mass displacements occurred every three days on average, and over 500 people were confined daily, with the Pacific region being the most affected. New areas of concern emerged in the Amazon-Orinoquía region, while departments like Chocó, Cauca, Guaviare, and Norte de Santander accounted for 84 % of victims. Compounding the crisis, natural disasters continued to impact regions already suffering from conflict, particularly Antioquia, Nariño, Arauca, and Amazonas.²⁰

Despite notable progress in Colombia over the past decade—including the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement, the country's largest guerrilla group—humanitarian needs continued to grow.²¹ ICRC indicated that in 2025, the humanitarian situation 'deteriorated considerably' beyond the situation in 2024, and that 2025 was the worst year of the past decade in terms of consequences for civilians.²² At least 250 000 Colombians have 'suffered from the humanitarian consequences of the conflict' in 2023, including due to forced displacement, confinements, threats, homicides, landmine explosions, and forced recruitment.²³ Colombia's situation remains complex, with an acute and multi-dimensional humanitarian crisis driven by the territorial expansion of armed non-state actors, the increasing effects of climate-related disasters, worsening socio-economic vulnerabilities, and the integration needs of over 2.9 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants.²⁴ In recent years, due to the expansion of armed groups, intensifying territorial disputes between splinter factions, increased social control, recruitment of children and youth, sexual violence and explosive hazards, among others, the situation worsened for civilians.²⁵ According to the EU Commission's European Civil Protection and

Humanitarian Aid Operations, 'the humanitarian impact continues to exceed the response capacity of government entities and humanitarian partners in several parts of Colombia,' and as a result an estimated 9.1 million people were projected to require humanitarian assistance in 2025 and will depend on complementary support from humanitarian actors.²⁶ Violence from situations of conflict has resulted in forced displacements and confinements of communities over the years, especially for Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities.¹¹²²⁷ Gaps in assistance persisted due to lack of resources and security conditions limiting humanitarian access, mostly related to threats and violence against personnel, armed clashes and the enforcement of armed lockdowns and mobility restrictions affecting operations.²⁸ Recurring violence, lack of state presence and the absence of protection guarantees in areas to which previously displaced persons have returned to, is a growing concern.²⁹

UNOCHA commented that Petro's administration has made significant policy strides and demonstrated a 'proactive commitment' to advancing the Total Peace efforts by fostering dialogues and ceasefires with certain non-state armed groups. However, 'despite these commendable efforts, Colombia still grapples with overlapping persistent humanitarian challenges, especially in areas affected by internal armed conflict and ongoing disasters which has constrained State presence and capacity. While some progress has been made in reduction in violence from armed confrontations because of cease-fire agreements, concerns about child recruitment, gender-based violence, landmine contamination, displacement, mobility and access restraints persist in areas affected by the presence of non-state armed groups. Current trends suggest the continuation of mass emergencies and related humanitarian needs.'³⁰

Lastly, Colombia has been regarded as a pioneer in protecting human rights defenders with the creation of a protection programme in 1997.^{1169F31} However, the state lacks a comprehensive protection policy for human rights defenders, and relies on the UNP to guarantee the security of persons-at-risk.^{1170F32} The Petro administration made 'concerted efforts' to address violence against social leaders and human rights defenders,^{1167F33} and as described in this report, Colombia has a number of policies, mechanisms, and laws to prevent abuses against profiles of targeted persons such as human rights defenders, former combatants and other individuals at risk; however, implementation of these measures is often 'poor'. Colombia also has more than 14 relevant laws and decrees and 18 institutional bodies involved in protecting human rights defenders. The government's strategy has 'primarily focused on physical security of individuals at risk,' but has evolved to take 'greater account of prevention and accountability.'¹¹⁶⁸³⁴ In April 2025, the JEP also commented that in relation to precautionary protection measures for former combatants, the existing protection measures have limited effects.³⁵

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