

3.1.3. Frente Comuneros del Sur (FCS)

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FCS emerged in 1992 as Comuneros del Sur and became the first front of the ELN in Nariño.[211] In March 2024, FCS split from the ELN alleging differences in financial and commanding control with ELN's top commanders.[212] FCS operates in 11 municipalities of central Nariño, a critical area that connects the Cauca department with the Pacific coast.[213] Cauca is a separate department and has its own Pacific coastline.[214] According to Pares, since FCS has limited territorial presence, it has established alliances with other illegal armed groups such as the CNEB and Autodefensas Unidas de Nariño.[215] FCS is made up of over 200 combatants[216] or 520, according to Infobae.[217]

FCS reportedly engage in extortion, kidnapping,[218] drug trafficking, recruitment of minors, and illegal mining.[219] Additionally, the FCS has established parallel 'justice' mechanisms and social behaviour norms in areas where they operate, which include the imposition of curfews and the issuing of communiques on social norms[220] more or less reproducing tactics of social control previously used by the ELN in these territories.[221] Between January 2023 (officially as a structure of the ELN until March 2024) and May 2025, FCS has been involved in 127 violent incidents, including the use of antipersonnel mines and the imposition to restrictions on the freedom of movement.[222] According to Pares, and without providing further details, since the FCS initiated peace dialogs with the government, the number of incidents of forced displacement, child recruitment, and confinement of the population, have decreased.[223]

In May 2024, the government recognised the FCS as a separate armed group and established a table to initiate negotiations.[224] FCS indicated that it would demobilise within three months[225] and it finally demobilised in April 2025.[226] In February 2025, FCS announced a protocol for the 'progressive disarmament' of the group and the establishment of a technical commission to guarantee the destruction of weaponry.[227] Also, in April 2025, FCS handed over 585 explosive devices, including grenades, antipersonnel mines, and mortars, to a commission composed of observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the General Attorney Office.[228]

In April 2025, the Supreme Court of Colombia approved an extradition request made by the United States of the FCS leader, Gabriel Yepes Mejía, casting doubts about the continuation of the peace process.[229] In May 2025, however, President Petro signed an administrative decree suspending the extradition process, so Yepes Mejía continued in the peace process.[230]

Current challenges for the peace process with FCS include the repetitive postponement of a cease-fire due to logistical challenges, lack of coordination among FCS combatants, and pressures from other armed groups in areas where FCS operate.[231]

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