

3.2.1. Catatumbo, Norte de Santander

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Catatumbo is a region rich in oil and one of the country's main centres for coca production[310] and according to the UN, it ‘is the country’s largest coca-growing enclave.’[311] It is one of the most strategic areas in the country due to the presence of a diverse number of illicit economies and its bordering location of Venezuela.[312] Confrontations between the ELN and the EMBF for the control of illicit revenues,[313] and attacks against infrastructure and state security forces have led to mass displacements, confinements, and the killing of civilians.[314]

UNOCHA reported that, in February 2025, 35 armed confrontations among illegal armed groups took place in, or around, the municipalities of Tibú, Convención, Teorama, and El Tarra.[315] According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), clashes between ELN and FARC dissidents between January and March 2025 led to the mass displacement of over 57 000 people, individual displacement of over 6 300 people, 17 800 confined, and over 10 000 facing severe restrictions to the freedom of movement, leaving them without access to essential goods and services.[316] The Office of the Ombudsperson indicated that, between January and September 2025, over 73 000 people have been forcefully displaced in the Norte de Santander department mostly in Catatumbo.[317] The same source indicated that in the same period, about 11 490 people were victims of confinement by illegal armed groups.[318]

Authorities reported that, between January and October 2025, 163 people have been killed during armed confrontations among illegal armed groups in the region, including 144 civilians, 6 former signatories of the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement, 3 social leaders, and 10 minors; most actions took place in the municipalities of Tibú, Teorama, Convención, El Tarra, and Hacarí.[319] However, without providing further detail, local NGOs indicated that there is underreporting in the region and that at least 400 killings have taken place among combatants, civilians, and state security forces.[320] According to the Constitutional Court, in 2025, seven former combatants of the FARC-EP have been killed and six disappeared.[321] News source Caracol quoted a representative of a local NGO as indicating that, according to their reporting, between January and November 2025, 300 minors have been forcefully recruited by illegal armed groups in Catatumbo, and that 12 minors and 62 persons under 28 years of age have been killed in the region.[322] UNOCHA reported that, due to the security situation, the access of humanitarian assistance is restricted in municipalities such as San Calixto, Teorama, Tibú, El Tarra, Convención, Hacarí, Sardinata, El Carmen, and Ábrego.[323]

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