

3.2.4. Arauca

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A bordering department with Venezuela, Arauca is a strategic corridor for the movement of illegal armed groups, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking in persons and contraband.[349] It is also a major department for the exploration and extraction of oil.[350] Arauca is disputed by the ELN and FARC dissidents (EMC and SM) seeking to consolidate their presence and hegemony through selective killings and executions.[351] The presence of Tren de Aragua is also reported,[352] although they have faced resistance from FARC dissidents.[353]

The Office of the Ombudsperson indicated that in 2024, 178 killings were reported in Arauca, being the highest rate of homicides per department (57.2) in the country.[354] Between January and September 2025, 84 people have been killed, including 4 social leaders and 2 signatories of the 2016 FARC-EP Peace Agreement.[355] The municipalities with the highest number of homicides in this period of 2025 were Tame (24 homicides), Arauquita (21), Saravena (16), and Arauca City (12).[356] The Office of the Ombudsperson indicated that in 2024, 170 people were kidnapped and/or forcefully disappeared; out of the 170, 71 were being eventually freed, 12 were found killed, and the whereabouts of 82 were unknown.[357] Between January and September 2025, the number of kidnapped and/or forcefully disappeared was 180, including 76 who were eventually freed, 14 who were killed, and 90 whose whereabouts were unknown.[358] Forced recruitment, including of minors and indigenous minors, is also reported,[359] which coincides with the high rate of school desertions and the dynamics of forced displacement which have left a number of schools empty.[360]

On 22 September 2025, the Office of the Ombudsperson issued an Early Warning (*Alerta Temprana*) communication on the situation in Arauca due to armed confrontations between the ELN and FARC dissident groups.[361] The municipalities most affected by illegal armed actors' action include Arauca City, Arauquita, Saravena, Fortul, Tame, Puerto Rondón, and Cravo Norte.[362] Confrontations among armed actors involve the use of improvised explosive devices, antipersonnel mines, and unexploded ordnance.[363] Illegal armed actors also use gas cylinders as rockets and carry out sabotage activities against oil pipelines, causing environmental contamination on harvesting and cattle fields.[364]

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