

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

- [349](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 25; Pares, Cuerpos para la guerra: Violencia Basada en Género y Reclutamiento en la frontera Colombo - Venezolana, 18 October 2024, [url](#), p. 6

- [350](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 25; Pares, Cuerpos para la guerra: Violencia Basada en Género y Reclutamiento en la frontera Colombo - Venezolana, 18 October 2024, [url](#), p. 6

- [351](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 25; Pares, Cuerpos para la guerra: Violencia Basada en Género y Reclutamiento en la frontera Colombo - Venezolana, 18 October 2024, [url](#), p. 6

- [354](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 26

- [355](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 26

- [356](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 26

- [357](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 30

- [358](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 30

- [359](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 34; Pares, Cuerpos para la guerra: Violencia Basada en Género y Reclutamiento en la frontera Colombo - Venezolana, 18 October 2024, [url](#), p. 6

- [360](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 34. See also: Pares, Cuerpos para la guerra: Violencia Basada en Género y Reclutamiento en la frontera Colombo - Venezolana, 18 October 2024, [url](#), p. 6

- [361](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 25

- [362](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 25

- [363](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 36

- [364](#)

Colombia, Defensoría del Pueblo, Alerta Temprana 014-2025, 22 September 2025, [url](#), p. 36