



Regional Overview: South America 6-12 August 2022

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Last week in [South America](#), new Colombian President Gustavo Petro was sworn in on 7 August. Meanwhile, the Gulf Clan and dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continued to perpetrate targeted attacks against civilians. In Brazil, nationwide protests took place in support of democracy and free elections, while clashes involving drug trafficking groups and state forces took place in several states. In Chile, violence increased in the Araucanía region as Indigenous militias carried out several arson attacks. Finally, clashes were reported between coca farmers and state forces in Bolivia amid demonstrations over the control of coca markets.

In **Colombia**, Petro was sworn in as the new Colombian president on 7 August, becoming the first left-wing politician to hold the position in the country's history ([AFP, 7 August 2022](#)). Petro is an economist, and a former senator, mayor of Bogotá, and member of the 19th of April Movement, a guerrilla group that demobilized in the late 1980s ([El Espectador, 12 October 2021](#)). His vice president, Francia Márquez, is the first-ever Afro-Colombian woman to hold this position and is also an environmental and women's rights activist ([AFP, 7 August 2022](#)).

On the day of the presidential inauguration, the Gulf Clan announced in an official statement a unilateral ceasefire after weeks of targeting state forces ([El Espectador, 7 August 2022](#)). Analysts see the announcement as a gesture of goodwill in the face of possible future negotiations with the Petro government ([El Espectador, 7 August 2022](#)). Nevertheless, on that same day, Gulf Clan shooters killed two social leaders who were members of a Council of Communal Action (JAC) and were participating in the Illicit Crops Substitution Program (PNIS) in Ituango municipality, Antioquia department. [ACLED's Subnational Surge Tracker](#) warned of increased violence in Antioquia during the preceding four weeks.

Dissidents of the FARC also conducted targeted attacks last week in the Cauca department. The Jaime Martinez dissident faction killed four people and set their bodies on fire in the rural area of Morales municipality. Members of the Carlos Patino dissident faction shot and killed three men who were at a party in El Tambo municipality. Authorities believe both attacks were part of a 'social cleansing plan,' in which armed groups target and kill members of certain groups, including drug addicts and thieves ([El Colombiano, 6 August 2022](#)).

In **Brazil**, nationwide pro-democracy protests took place last week, with thousands of people taking to the streets in support of democratic principles and fair elections. Teachers, students, lawyers, and members of different political parties led protests in all state capitals and several other cities, where they read a manifesto mirroring the 1977 "Letter to All Brazilians" ([G1, 11 August 2022](#)). The first "Letter to All Brazilians" manifesto was drafted during the Brazilian military dictatorship, in which Brazilians called for a prompt return of the rule of law ([G1, 11 August 2022](#)). The largely peaceful protests took place amid growing concerns about President Jair Bolsonaro's repeated attacks on the voting system and fears that he may contest the results of the elections if he loses ([BBC, 19 July 2022](#)). The first round of the presidential and general elections will occur on 2 October.

Meanwhile, ongoing rivalries between drug trafficking groups prompted armed clashes in multiple states last week, alongside clashes between these groups and state forces. In Paraná state, a clash between the military police and the First Capital Command (PCC) left eight gang members dead in Curitiba city. In Rio de Janeiro state, intense shoot-outs between the Red Command (CV) and the Third Pure Command (TCP) took place in Maricá city. The ongoing turf war in the region has prompted some residents to abandon their homes, while school classes were canceled ([G1, 8 August 2022](#)). At least two drug traffickers were also killed in clashes with the military police during a police intervention.

In Mato Grosso state, members of the CV killed four civilians who were mistaken for PCC members in Nova Monte Verde city last week. A clash with state forces ensued, and three CV members were killed. While violence in Mato Grosso has been common, it has become increasingly volatile, resulting in a shift from a place of 'consistent risk' to being considered an area of 'extreme risk' by [ACLED's Volatility](#)

[and Risk Predictability Index](#). [ACLEd's Subnational Surge Tracker](#) warned of increased violence in the state during the preceding four weeks.

In **Chile**, arson attacks perpetrated by Indigenous militias increased in the Araucanía region last week, with the Coordination Arauco Malleco (CAM) setting fire to forestry machinery in at least three different communes. While Indigenous militias often carry out attacks in rural areas, the Weichan Auka Mapu (WAM) carried out an arson attack in Canete's urban area last week, setting two public service buses on fire. Banners alluding to the CAM were also found at the scene. These trends contribute to the 220% increase in violent events in Araucanía last week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month flagged by [ACLEd's Subnational Surge Tracker](#). The Subnational Tracker also warned of increased violence in Araucania during the preceding four weeks.

Elsewhere, in the O'Higgins region, a group of four to five suspected militiamen stormed a forestry site, beat workers, and set fire to two pieces of machinery in the Paredones commune. The event is the northernmost arson attack to have been perpetrated by suspected Indigenous militias ([La Nacion](#), 10 August 2022). Before that, the northernmost attack was reported in the adjacent Maule region in [December 2021](#), about 120 kilometers south of Paredones, indicating that militiamen are further expanding their targeting area.

Finally, in **Bolivia**, coca leaf farmers staged demonstrations in La Paz city last week for the second consecutive week. The farmers, associated with the Departmental Association of Coca Producers (ADEPCOCA) coca market, demand the closure of a parallel market controlled by government supporters. Clashes were reported between demonstrators and police forces, who used tear gas against the farmers. At least two farmers were injured, while one farmer died when attempting to use dynamite sticks against the police. These events contribute to the 100% increase in violent events in La Paz over the past week relative to the weekly average for the preceding month, as flagged by [ACLEd's Subnational Surge Tracker](#). Since [September 2021](#), there has been a leadership dispute between two groups of coca growers – one loyal to the government, the other to the political opposition ([El Deber](#), 5 October 2021). The ADEPCOCA controls the legalized coca market, the raw ingredient for cocaine ([Reuters](#), 28 September 2021).

Note: This dashboard automatically updates to cover the latest four weeks of data released by ACLED. Use the date filters to view data for the one-week period covered by this Regional Overview.



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