

World Report 2026; Colombia

Abuses by armed groups, limited access to justice, and high levels of poverty, especially among rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities, remain serious human rights concerns in Colombia.

Nearly a decade after the 2016 peace accord between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC) and the government ended a five-decade-long conflict, violence has reemerged in new forms, with an increased presence of armed groups. Despite President Gustavo Petro's "total peace" strategy, 2025 was marked by one of the worst humanitarian tolls in a decade.

The run-up to Colombia's 2026 legislative and presidential elections was marred by violence, including the killing of congressman and would-be presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay.

Abuses by Armed Groups and Humanitarian Crises

Numerous armed groups operate in Colombia fueled by illegal economies, including drug trafficking, illegal mining, and deforestation. These include the National Liberation Army (ELN), a group formed in the 1960s; several "dissident" groups that emerged from the demobilization of the FARC in 2017, including the Central General Staff (EMC), the General Staff of Blocs and Fronts (EMBF), and the National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army (CNEB); and the "Gulf Clan" (or Gaitanist Army of Colombia, EGC), which emerged from the demobilization of paramilitary groups in the mid-2000s.

[Across the country, armed groups continue to apply violent strategies](#) to establish control over the population.

According to [the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), more than 137,000 people were prevented by threats, fighting or other armed group activities from leaving their communities between January and August, a situation known as "confinement"—a significant increase compared to 2024.

In January, the [ELN started a campaign](#) to regain control of much of the Catatumbo region in North Santander state, killing, assaulting, kidnapping, and disappearing civilians accused of ties to the 33rd Front, a group that emerged from the 2017 FARC demobilization. The violence forced over 64,000 people to flee their homes—one of the [largest mass displacements](#) in Colombia in decades.

The [Ombudsperson's Office](#) reported 625 cases of child recruitment by armed groups in 2024, a 81 percent increase compared to the 342 cases the office documented in 2023. Data from the [UN](#) indicates the upward trend has continued in 2025.

Between January and August 2025, 544 civilians were injured or killed by explosive devices, a 145 percent increase from 2024, according to [OCHA](#). Drone attacks with explosives also rose 138 percent in the first half of the year, according to the [Ministry of Defense](#).

Security forces and judicial authorities have often failed to effectively protect the population, ensure victims' access to justice, and meaningfully investigate and dismantle criminal groups.

Municipalities and state governments often lack sufficient funding to assist victims, and national government assistance has often been slow and insufficient. Foreign [aid cuts by the United States](#) government have further hindered the response to the humanitarian crises, including by [UN](#) entities.

Violations by Public Security Forces

Since President Petro took office in August 2022, Colombia has seen a decrease in the number of reported violations by security forces. However, accountability for past abuses and reforms to ensure non-repetition remains limited.

While the Ministry of Defense has reformed [protocols related to the use of force](#) and the [use of less lethal weapons](#) and suspended some police officers responsible for abuses, it has failed to introduce broader reforms, including to limit the jurisdiction of the military justice system over investigations into human rights violations committed by security forces.

In the early hours of September 8, [members of the Navy opened fire](#) on a boat carrying the mayor of Mosquera, Nariño state, killing a community leader who was serving as an advisor to the mayor.

The government has resumed airstrikes against FARC dissident groups. Between August and November, at least [15 children](#) recruited by these groups had been killed in these operations.

In November, [Caracol](#), a media outlet, revealed evidence that some intelligence officials and members of the security forces colluded with FARC dissident groups, including by providing them intelligence information and securing permits for weapons and armored vehicles.

Violence against Human Rights Defenders and Other People at Risk

Colombia is among the countries with the highest number of human rights defenders killed worldwide, with at least 1,500 killed since 2016, according to the country's [Ombudsperson's Office](#). Between January and September, [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) received 157 new allegations of killings of human rights defenders and social leaders.

The country has a broad range of policies, mechanisms, and laws to prevent abuses against human rights defenders and other people at higher risk, including demobilized FARC fighters. But government actions have [fallen short](#) in addressing such violence.

Data provided by the [Attorney General's Office](#) shows it investigated 1,381 cases of killings of human rights defenders between January 2016 and December 2024, bringing charges in 527 (38 percent) and securing convictions in 227 (16.5 percent).

The run-up to Colombia's 2026 legislative and presidential elections was [marred by violence](#) in 2025, including the killing of congressman and would-be presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay. The [Ombudsperson's Office](#) identified risks to civil and political rights that could affect the electoral process, and called for immediate and urgent measures in 224 of the country's 1,103 municipalities. The [European Union's foreign service](#) and the European Parliament [urged](#) authorities to protect political actors and others exercising their democratic rights.

Peace Negotiations, Negotiated Disarmament, and Accountability

The 2016 peace agreement established a plan to reduce rural poverty, increase citizen participation in political decisions, disarm and reintegrate former FARC fighters, sever links between drug trafficking and political violence, and address victims' rights through transitional justice measures. Despite President Petro's stated support of the peace agreement, its [implementation](#) remains limited.

In September, the [Constitutional Court](#) ordered an evaluation of the Peace Agreement Implementation Unit, responsible for leading the implementation of the peace agreement, given its shortcomings.

The peace agreement created a Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), charged with investigating and prosecuting all parties to the armed conflict. Under the accord, defendants who confess to their crimes and fully cooperate with the justice system are to be sentenced to “special sanctions,” meaning up to eight years of community service under “effective restrictions of liberty” but no prison terms.

In August, the [JEP trial](#) of Colonel Publio Hernán Mejía Gutiérrez for his alleged role in 72 extrajudicial killings concluded; a ruling was still pending at time of writing. The [trial](#) of Colonel David Herley Guzmán Ramírez for his alleged role in 18 extrajudicial killings started in July.

In September, the JEP issued its first two sentences. It found [seven former members of the highest decision-making body of the FARC](#) guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including torture, sexual violence, and slavery, for their responsibility in the kidnappings of at least 21,396 victims, and found [12 former members of the army](#) guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes for their responsibility in 135 enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings unlawfully presented as combat casualties. Both decisions sentenced those responsible to 8 years of effective restriction of liberty, but neither established a strict monitoring system nor clearly defined a perimeter delimiting permissible movements of those convicted, undermining the meaningfulness of the sanction. Victims’ groups appealed both decisions.

The government continued its “total peace” policy which seeks the negotiated disarmament of armed and organized crime groups. In January 2025, the government suspended talks with the ELN after [an attack in Catatumbo](#). Negotiations continue with other armed groups, including the EMBF, the CNEB, Comuneros del Sur, a dissident group of the ELN, and the EGC, but progress has been limited.

In July 2024, the government introduced a [draft law](#) in Congress that would allow criminal groups to receive reduced sentences and retain a portion of their illicit profits in exchange for disarmament.

Internal Displacement, Reparations, and Land Restitution

[OCHA](#) reported that between January and August more than 79,500 people were victims of mass displacement (most of them in the Catatumbo region), exceeding by 53 percent the total recorded in all of 2024 (52,000). Colombia defines “mass displacement” as the displacement of 50 or more people or 10 or more families.

Around 17 percent of more than 10 million [registered](#) victims of the armed conflict had received reparations as of August. Forty-one percent of [land restitution](#) claims filed before the courts have been resolved through rulings, benefiting more than 12,000 families.

Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

More than 2.9 million Venezuelans live in Colombia. At time of writing, [2.1 million](#) of them had received temporary protection status for 10 years. Roughly 2.5 million had requested it.

In response to changes in US migration and asylum policies, many migrants and asylum seekers tried to return to their home countries, often through Colombia. As of August 2025, [more than 14,000 such people had entered Colombia](#), with some facing serious abuses such as sexual violence and forced recruitment on the journey.

According to the [UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants](#), women and young migrants in Colombia face additional obstacles, “including discrimination in hiring and an increased likelihood of being hired for precarious employment.”

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

In 2024 and 2025, femicides and sexual violence [increased](#) compared to previous years, according to the Ombudsperson’s Office. Human trafficking also reportedly [rose](#), with women comprising nearly 75 percent of victims; between January and June, sexual exploitation was involved in approximately [60 percent](#) of the reported cases. In August, Congress passed a [law](#) to ratify International Labour Organization Convention 190 on workplace violence and harassment in the world of work.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Despite constitutional protections against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people continue to face high levels of violence and discrimination. According to figures from the nongovernmental organization Caribe Afirmativo [published](#) in May, 164 LGBT people were killed in Colombia in 2024.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

High levels of poverty, especially among rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities, remain a serious human rights concern. Women still suffer higher rates of poverty than men.

The 2016 peace accord established “Territorial Development Programs” (PDET) to increase the presence of state institutions in 170 municipalities highly affected by past armed conflict, poverty, and illegal economic activity such as drug trafficking. But efforts to implement the PDET have been limited. The multidimensional poverty rate in these areas ([24.4 percent](#)) was more than double the national rate ([11.5 percent](#)) in 2024.

Climate Policy and Impacts

In the first quarter of 2025, the [government registered](#) a decrease of 33 percent in deforestation compared to the same period in 2024. However, according to [government figures](#), 113,608 hectares of land were deforested in 2024, a 43 percent increase compared to 2023.

Cattle ranchers and FARC dissident groups are major drivers of deforestation. The dissidents pressure residents to cut down trees, extort farmers, promote coca crops to produce cocaine, or threaten people who defend conservation.

Freedom of Expression

According to [Reporters Without Borders](#), Colombia remained one of the world’s most dangerous countries for journalists.

In September 2024, President Petro issued a [presidential resolution](#) on press freedom directing all officials of the executive branch to guarantee a safe environment for freedom of expression. However, the [Ombudsperson’s Office and the Foundation for Press Freedom](#), a free press group, reported in September that implementation of the resolution has been slow, and documented cases of stigmatization and judicial harassment of journalists by public officials.

US Sanctions

In September, the [US removed Colombia](#) from a list of countries cooperating with the US in counternarcotics efforts. Later that month, the [US revoked President Petro's visa](#) after he called on the US military to disregard presidential orders during a pro-Palestine protest in New York. In October, [the US treasury department's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned Petro](#) and members of his inner circle, accusing them of participating in “global illicit drug trade.”