

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Colombia: Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including relocation options available to IDPs; whether IDPs are issued documents that indicate their status, including requirements and procedures to obtain copies of these documents (2020–January 2022) [COL200900.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

1. Overview

The US CIA *World Factbook* estimates that the population of Colombia is approximately 50.4 million as of July 2021 (US 30 Nov. 2021). Sources report that there have been approximately (US 30 Nov. 2021) or "more than" (HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 1) 8.2 million IDPs in Colombia since 1985 (US 30 Nov. 2021; HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 1). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), a Geneva-based organization established as part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) that provides data and analysis on internal displacement (NRC n.d.), Colombia has experienced "one of the world's most acute internal displacement situations" due to five decades of conflict; as of 31 December 2020, the country had over 4.9 million IDPs (NRC [2021a]).

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicates that between January and October 2020, 21,052 people were internally displaced (UN 20 Nov. 2020, 1). NRC reports 170,000 new displacements [1] in 2020, including 106,000 resulting from "conflict or violence" and 64,000 from "disasters" (NRC [2021a]). Data from Colombia's Office of the Ombudsman (Defensoría del Pueblo) indicates that in 2020, [translation] "a total of 90 mass events" (incidents of violence related to armed conflict) resulted in the forced displacement and confinement of 28,509 individuals (Colombia 7 Jan. 2021). According to OCHA, 14,418 individuals returned to their homes, while 6,634 remained displaced as of 1 November 2020 (UN 20 Nov. 2020). The same source provided the following demographic statistics for 2020:

Group	Number of Displaced Individuals
Men	3,114
Women	4,073
Children (male)	2,172
Children (female)	1,577
Migrants and Refugees	732

(UN 20 Nov. 2020)

Data from the Office of the Ombudsman reports that from January to March 2021, 27,435 individuals were displaced in Colombia (Colombia 26 Apr. 2021).

The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* states that, according to the Colombian government and civil society as well as international organizations, the following factors contribute to displacement:

– Internal conflict and violence, including the conflict between the government and the FARC, and the conflict between the government and other armed groups.

The Office of the Ombudsman similarly reported that the [translation] "main cause" of displacement was "confrontations between illegal armed groups disputing territories and committing other crimes such as threats, harassment, stigmatization, homicides, sexual violence, recruitment or risk of recruitment," contamination of land with "landmines and unexploded ordnance, kidnapping and disappearances" (Colombia 7 Jan. 2021).

1.1 Groups Most Affected by Forced Displacement

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), an organization that promotes, protects, and defends the rights of Indigenous Peoples (IWGIA n.d.), indicates that according to the 2018 census, there are approximately 1.9 million Indigenous people [3.7 percent of the national population] and 4.7 million "who self-identify as black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal or Palenquero" (9.34 percent of the national population) in Colombia (IWGIA Apr. 2021, 362). The US CIA *World Factbook* estimates that Afro-Colombians (including Raizal and Palenquero) represent 6.8 percent of the total population, while "Amerindian[s]" represent 4.3 percent (US 30 Nov. 2021). Freedom House states that, while "as much as 25 percent" of the population is Afro-Colombian, the group accounts for "the largest segment" of those displaced by violence (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021, Sec. F4).

The UN Security Council indicates that both Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities were "particularly affected" by a number of risks, including forced displacement (UN 25 Sept. 2020, para. 62). Human Rights Watch (HRW) similarly states that "roughly 60 percent" of IDPs since 2017 have been Indigenous or Afro-Colombian (HRW 11 May 2020). OCHA statistics indicate that, between January and October 2020, 44 percent of displaced individuals were Afro-Colombian, while 22 percent were Indigenous (UN 20 Nov. 2020). US *Country Reports 2020* notes "approximately" 4.5 percent of "new IDPs registered by the government" in 2020 were Indigenous, while "approximately" 14 percent were Afro-Colombian (US 30 Mar. 2021, 21). For example, according to HRW, 74 Indigenous Emberá families were displaced in April 2020 due to armed group violence (HRW 11 May 2020). Amnesty International reports that "more than" 1,590 Emberá Dobidá people were displaced in two "massive displacements" in 2020 (Amnesty International 7 Apr. 2021). For further information on the situation of Afro-Colombians, including internal displacement, see Responses to Information Requests COL200219 of May 2020 and COL200697 of August 2021.

A press release by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACRH) indicates that, according to former FARC combatants, they have been forced to "abandon their territories" due "escalating conflicts between illegal armed groups" (OAS 13 Oct. 2020). According to Amnesty International, "[s]ome 100 former FARC combatants" from the Territorial Training and Reincorporation Area (Espacios Territoriales de Capacitación y Reincorporación, ETCR) of Ituango were displaced in 2020 (Amnesty International 7 Apr. 2021). Contagio Radio, a news website and radio station that focuses on human rights (Contagio Radio n.d.), reported in April 2021 that 11 families of former FARC combatants (47 individuals) were displaced from the ETCR in Ituango as a result of threats from armed groups (Contagio Radio 10 Apr. 2021).

1.2 Areas Most Affected by Forced Displacement

Médecins sans frontières (MSF) notes that "between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020," "around 14,000 people" were forcibly displaced in the Pacific region of Nariño (MSF 3 Mar. 2020). According to OCHA, from January to October 2020, 69 percent of IDPs were [translation] "concentrated" in the Pacific region, with the Nariño and Chocó departments "most affected" (UN 20 Nov. 2020). Freedom House states that in 2020, Indigenous communities faced "increasing violence and displacement" in the departments of Nariño, Chocó, and Cauca (Freedom House 3 Mar. 2021). According to the Office of the Ombudsman, 43 events were [translation] "reported" in the department of Nariño in 2020, resulting in the displacement of 14,048 individuals or 4,711 families (Colombia 7 Jan. 2021). IACRH notes that according to [translation] "official information," "more than" 2,500 individuals were displaced by violence in the department of Chocó in 2020 (OAS 13 Oct. 2020). According to the UN Security Council, "mass displacements and confinements" occurred between June and September 2021, "especially" in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Chocó, Córdoba, and Nariño (UN 24 Sept. 2021, para. 1, 9).

2. Situation of IDPs

moreover, IDPs face "[i]ntense criminality and extortion" in the areas in which they live (NRC Nov. 2021, 33). According to sources, IDPs are "[s]omewhat food insecure" with "[i]nconsistent" access to water (NRC Nov. 2021, 33) or "often" have "limited access to water and food" (HRW 11 May 2020). According to MSF, IDPs treated by MSF report "a lack of clean drinking water," "poor sanitation," and "no access to medical services for long periods of time" (MSF 28 Oct. 2020). The New Humanitarian, a news organization that focuses on humanitarian crises (The New Humanitarian n.d.), reports that "some of those displaced" by violence move into *invasiones* [2] "with no job opportunities and suffering from hunger" (The New Humanitarian 10 Dec. 2020). The UNHCR states that the informal IDP settlements around cities lack "access to basic services, including electricity and water" (UN Sept. 2020, 7).

Sources provide the following examples of IDP situations:

- "[A]round 4,000 people" are "living in dire conditions in camps around the Telembí River" in the department of Nariño (MSF 3 Mar. 2020).
- "[M]ore than 680 families" stayed in "makeshift camps" over Christmas 2019 in the town of Olaya Herrera in Nariño (MSF 3 Mar. 2020).
- "[R]oughly" 100 Indigenous people have been living in a Buenaventura community centre since 2017 "with limited access to water and health services" in the Valle del Cauca department (HRW 11 May 2020).
- As of May 2020, 74 Indigenous families who "fled their homes" in early April were "sleeping on the floors of peoples' houses in overcrowded conditions" and lacked both "basic hygiene supplies" and "sufficient food" (HRW 11 May 2020).

3. State Protection

US *Country Reports 2020* indicates that "by law 52 government agencies are responsible for assisting registered IDPs" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 22). The Unit for Attention and Integral Reparation to Victims [Victim Assistance and Comprehensive Reparation Unit] (Unidad de Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, UARIV), a government entity whose mission is to provide support to victims of conflict (Colombia n.d.a), states that between 2019 and November 2020, it allocated [translation] "more than" 5 billion pesos [C\$1,622,797] to "guarantee housing, food, and immediate humanitarian aid to displaced families" living in the department of Antioquia (Colombia 25 Nov. 2020).

US *Country Reports 2020* indicates that, in 2020, the government of Colombia "continued to struggle to provide adequate protection or humanitarian assistance to newly displaced populations" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 21). A study conducted by the Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, CODHES) [3] indicates that between May and July 2021, per their survey of 907 households of displaced families across 19 municipalities, showed that 32.6 percent of households in [translation] "[l]arge" municipalities, 37.3 percent in "[m]edium" municipalities, and 22.2 percent in "[s]mall" municipalities did not receive "[a]ny assistance," from "[t]raditional programs" or otherwise (Comisión Nov. 2021, 29, 31, 132). US *Country Reports 2020* indicates that, according to "[i]nternational organizations and civil society," "high-displacement areas" did not have the capacity to process IDP registrations and this "often delayed assistance" to IDPs (US 30 Mar. 2021, 22). The same source indicates that although there were "several government initiatives" aimed at improving access to services for IDPs and informing them of their rights, municipalities in "many parts" of Colombia lacked the "resources or capacity to respond to new displacements and provide humanitarian assistance to IDPs" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 22).

IDMC states that "[o]bstacles remain" to "achieving durable solutions" to internal displacement in Colombia, including "compensation, land and property restitution, and implementation of other relevant provisions of the peace deal" (NRC [2021a]). According to sources, progress on land restitution under the Victims and Land Restitution Law (*Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras, LVRT*) [4] has been "slow" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 12; HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 7). US *Country Reports 2020* indicates that "[d]espite improvements" in the Registry of Victims [Single Victims Registry; Unified Victims Registry] (Registro Único de Víctimas, RUV), "IDPs experienced delays in receiving responses to their displacement claims" due to factors such as a "large backlog of claims" and a "lack of the unit's presence in rural areas" (US 30 Mar. 2021, 21). Freedom House similarly notes that "the legal process

displaced people can declare themselves as such for up to two years after they become displaced. Combined with the administrative processes for reviewing cases, this can lead to a time lag between the start date of displacement and the time of its registration in the Colombian government's database. (NRC [2021b])

According to the General Secretariat of the Office of the Mayor of Bogota (Secretaría General – Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá), the UARIV has the following responsibilities:

- carrying out the [translation] "assessment process" for inclusion in the RUV
- making a decision on whether an individual should be included in the RUV
- verifying the information in the RUV
- issuing copies of RUV decisions (Bogotá 25 Oct. 2018).

On its YouTube channel, UARIV has a video on the issuance of certificates that shows the appearance of the letter indicating inclusion in the RUV (Colombia 20 Aug. 2021, 3:41–4:15).

For further information on the UARIV and the RUV, see *Colombia: Fact-Finding Mission Report. Conflict Dynamics in the Post-FARC-EP Period and State Protection* of March 2020.

4.1 Requirements and Procedures to Obtain Documents

In order to be recognized as displaced, the Office of the Ombudsman's website instructs individuals or households to visit the offices of the Office of the Prosecutor General (Ministerio Público) in their city or municipality, either the municipal subdivision of the Attorney General's Office (Personería), the Office of the Inspector General (Procuraduría) or the Office of the Ombudsman, and follow the official's instructions in filing a statement on the events leading to their displacement (Colombia n.d.c). Subsequently,

[translation]

[t]he statement will be sent to the [UARIV], which decides whether or not to include the person or household in the [RUV] depending on the results of the assessment ([lasting] no more than 60 days). (Colombia n.d.c)

The UARIV website provides the following step-by-step guide for registration:

[translation]

- As soon as you have suffered harm due to acts committed during the armed conflict, you should go to the Office of the Prosecutor General and report the victimizing acts you and your family have experienced. You can reach out to the municipal offices of the Municipal Representative, the Ombudsman or the Attorney General, who are always willing to process your requests.
- At the time of making the statement before the Public Prosecutor's Office, you may bring documents that assist in proving the victimizing acts, if you have them in your possession.
...
- After having recounted the facts before the Public Prosecutor's Office, your statement will be evaluated by the UARIV. While the process, which takes 60 working days, is in progress, the victim is entitled to receive immediate humanitarian attention from the local authorities (mayor's office and/or departmental governor's office).
- After UARIV issues a decision on the statement, it generates a resolution of inclusion or non-inclusion to be delivered to the deponent or a member of their immediate family, who will be summoned by telephone so that this notification can be made personally.
 - If you are included in the Registry of Victims, the Unit official who delivers your resolution will explain the course you should follow depending on your situation. Reparation to victims involves not only monetary compensation, but also State support that guarantees the effective enjoyment of the rights to education, health, housing,

The UARIV website further indicates that an individual can apply for a certificate of inclusion in the RUV either at any government service centre (or consulate, for those living abroad) or through the UARIV website (Colombia n.d.b).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) defines displacements as a "number of movements," noting that it differs from the number of IDPs because individuals may be displaced more than once (NRC [2021a]).

[2] According to the New Humanitarian, *invasiones* is "a term the government uses to describe neighbourhoods of squatters who have built improvised housing on land they don't own" (The New Humanitarian 10 Dec. 2020).

[3] The Consultancy on Human Rights and Displacement (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, CODHES) a Colombian civil society organization that conducts research and promotes the protection of human rights in Colombia (CODHES n.d.a), conducted the survey, which is cited in a report by the Commission for Monitoring Public Policy on Forced Displacement (Comisión de Seguimiento a la Política Pública sobre Desplazamiento Forzado), which was formed in 2005 by various civil society organizations, including CODHES (CODHES n.d.b).

[4] According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the 2011 Victims' Law [Victims and Land Restitution Law (*Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras, LVRT*)] "was enacted to restore millions of hectares left behind by or stolen from internally displaced Colombians during the conflict" (HRW 13 Jan. 2021, 7). For further information on the *LVRT*, see section 5.1 in *Colombia: Fact-Finding Mission Report. Conflict Dynamics in the Post-FARC-EP Period and State Protection* of March 2020.

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Internet sites, including: ACAPS; Al Jazeera; Asociación Nacional de Afrocolombianos Desplazados; Associated Press; Australia – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; BBC; Belgium – Commissariat général aux réfugiés et aux apatrides; Bertelsmann Stiftung; Center for Strategic and International Studies; Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular; Centro de Recursos Integrales para la Familia; Colombia – Fiscalía General de la Nación, Migración Colombia; Coordinación de Consejos Comunitarios y Organizaciones de Base del Pueblo Negro de la Costa Pacífica del Cauca; Coordinación Étnica Nacional de Paz; Corporación Opción Legal; Council on Foreign Relations; EU – European Asylum Support Office; Fédération internationale pour les droits humains; Fundación Ideas para la Paz; InSight Crime; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz; International Crisis Group; INTERPOL; Jesuit Refugee Service; Medellín – Secretaría de Inclusión Social, Familia y Derechos Humanos; Minority Rights Group International; Netherlands – Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés; Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; Peace Brigades International Colombia; Programa Somos Defensores; Radio Caracol; Red de Derechos Humanos del Pacífico Nariñense; Refugees International; Reporters sans frontières; Reuters; Semana; Transparency International; UK – Home Office; UN – Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld, UNDP, UN Women, WHO; US – Library of Congress; Washington Office on Latin America; Wilson Center; World Bank.

ecoi.net summary: 
Query response on
Colombia: Situation of IDPs
(2020 - January 2022) (figures;
groups and areas most
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