



Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Colombia – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

01 July 2024

Increase in reported cases of domestic violence in 2024

According to the Ministry of Defence, more than 63,500 cases of domestic violence were reported in Colombia between January and May 2024, which is the highest figure since surveys began and an increase of around 35% against the same period last year.¹

Paz Total: Peace talks with Segunda Marquetalia in Caracas, unilateral ceasefire by guerrillas

Peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC dissident group Segunda Marquetalia took place in Caracas between 24.06. and 29.06.24. The outcomes of this first round of talks included a unilateral ceasefire on the part of the guerrillas and the promise to release persons held by them. An agreement has been reached on "early measures for the comprehensive and gradual de-escalation of the conflict in the territories", which comprises nine points. The next cycle of talks is scheduled to take place in Cuba in the second week of August 2024. The Segunda Marquetalia currently operates primarily in the south-western departments of Cauca, Nariño and Putumayo as well as at some points along the Colombian-Venezuelan border, including in the form of alliances with other criminal actors.²

08 July 2024

Slight decline in deadly force used against social leaders

According to data collected by the NGO Indepaz, lethal violence against social leaders (líderes sociales) in Colombia fell slightly in the first half of 2024, with 86 recorded homicides compared to 96 such offences in the same period last year. As in previous years, the regions of Antioquia, Putumayo, Cauca and Valle del Cauca were particularly affected. Since the start of the peace process in 2016, Indepaz has registered more than 1,600 homicides of social leaders. The UN and NGOs are calling on the Colombian government to take stronger protective measures and prosecute the perpetrators more consistently.³

22 July 2024

Government ends ceasefire with EMC units

On 16.07.24, the Ministry of Defence announced the termination of the ceasefire with units of the guerrilla group Estado Mayor Central (EMC), led by commander Iván Mordisco. Allegedly, Mordisco continues to decline to enter into peace talks with the government. According to Defence Minister Iván Velásquez, this means the resumption of offensives against 24 EMC units. The government had already suspended a ceasefire with EMC factions in the

south-western departments of Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño on 20.03.24 due to ongoing violence. The EMC, which has around 3,800 members, was founded by renegade former FARC fighters who rejected the 2016 peace agreement with the government. According to the ministry, the ceasefire is to be continued for a further three months with the Gentil Duarte bloc, the Jorge Suarez Briceño bloc and the Raul Reyes Front in the provinces of Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Meta and Caquetá.⁴

Legal status for legal guardians of Venezuelan migrant minors

On 19.07.24, the Colombian government announced that it would issue special residence permits for the legal guardians of over 270,000 underage Venezuelan migrants. According to the director of the Colombian migration authority, Fernando García, this measure is intended to improve the legal status of these adults and thus facilitate their integration into Colombian society, employment and access to state services, particularly health and education services for minors and adults.

According to the Colombian migration authority, an estimated 2.5 million Venezuelans were living in Colombia in 2023.⁵

05 August 2024

Ceasefire agreement with ELN expired

On 03.08.24, the bilateral ceasefire agreed between the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the government expired. The ceasefire had been initially agreed for six months in August 2023 and was extended for a further six months in February 2024. A few hours earlier, the UN and the Colombian Bishops' Conference proposed an extension of a few weeks to gain time for further talks. The government delegation initially agreed to the proposal to allow the negotiating partners to meet. However, representatives of the ELN made the extension conditional upon its removal from the list of organised armed groups (GAO) by presidential decree and the recognition of the ELN's political nature. While both parties express their willingness to engage in a peace dialogue, they accuse each other of not honouring the agreements made.⁶

19 August 2024

Guerrilla group enforces strike in Chocó with arms

On 11.08.24, the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) declared an indefinite armed strike in the southern half of the province of Chocó, along the San Juan, Sipí and Cajón rivers, after the agreed bilateral ceasefire between the ELN and the government expired on 03.08.24 (cf. BN of 05.08.24). The office of the state ombudsman reported that around 45,000 people were restricted in their mobility. Access to food, health and education services is limited. In a brochure published by the ELN it accuses the paramilitary Clan del Golfo, also known as the Gaitán Army of Colombia (EGC), of using civilian boats and ferries in collusion with security forces to occupy strategic positions along the San Juan River. According to Nubia Carolina Córdoba, Governor of Chocó, there is virtually no movement on the San Juan River, the main traffic artery of the rural communities. In addition, the illegal armed groups are said to have laid landmines.⁷

26 August 2024

Former FARC members expelled from reintegration camp

On 20.08.24, around 80 people left the Miravalle reintegration camp set up for former FARC fighters in the southern department of Caquetá and moved to the municipality of El Doncello, 200 kilometres away. The move was accompanied by the Ministry of the Interior, the UN Verification Mission, the MAP-OAS and the Ombudsman's Office and other local authorities. The move came after the camp's inhabitants received death threats from the Iván Díaz Front rebel group. The rebel group, which claims control of agricultural land and drug trafficking in the region, accused the former FARC members of supporting a rival rebel group. The territories for former FARC combatants, known as Espacio Territorial de Capacitación y Reincorporación (ETCR), were established by the Colombian government following the 2016 peace agreement pursuant to which more than 14,000 FARC rebels had put down

their arms. However, the population of these villages has diminished considerably because of security problems and a lack of job prospects. Five of the 24 ETCRs, including Miravalle, have already been completely abandoned. A UN report published in April 2024 also highlights the ongoing security problems. According to the report, 416 former FARC combatants have been killed since the peace agreement was signed.⁸

02 September 2024

Indigenous peoples demand protection from violence by FARC dissidents

Since 20.08.24, more than 4,000 representatives of indigenous peoples protested peacefully in Parque El Nacimiento in Bogotá, demanding a solution to the surge of violence in the department of Cauca. Represented by the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC), the protesters have requested a personal meeting with President Gustavo Petro in order to have a resolution signed that provides for a solution to end the violence committed by non-state actors in Cauca and the participation of the CRIC in the peace process. Petro has not yet agreed to this. Following a conference with the CRIC, Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo announced his intention to travel to Cauca to talk to the authorities and citizens. He also praised the protesters' willingness to engage in dialogue, in contrast to the Autoridades Indígenas del Sur Occidente (AISO), whose protest blockades on the Pan-American motorway recently resulted in the death of one person. State forces and the FARC dissident group Estado Mayor Central (EMC) regularly clash in Cauca. The Asociación de Indígenas del Norte del Cauca (North Cauca Indigenous Association) accuses the EMC of a wave of violence, particularly against social leaders, the so-called Líderes Sociales. Most recently, yet another representative of the Indigenous Guard (Guardia Indígena) was killed on 18.08.24. The agreed ceasefire between the government and the EMC was suspended in March 2024 after the EMC injured two people and killed a mayor during an attack on an indigenous community (cf. BN of 18.03.24).⁹

23 September 2024

Peace talks with ELN suspended

The Colombian government's peace delegation announced on 18.09.24 that it was suspending peace talks with the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). This step follows an attack on a military base in Arauca attributed to the ELN on 17.09.24, in which three soldiers were killed and 26 others injured. According to the peace delegation, a resumption of talks is only possible if the ELN unequivocally commits to peace. According to Antonio García, one of the group's commanders, the ELN believes that peace negotiations can continue despite military operations. Peace talks with the ELN have been ongoing since 2022 as part of President Gustavo Petro's policy of comprehensive peace (Paz Total). An agreed ceasefire expired in August 2024 after months of stalled negotiations (cf. BN of 05.08.24). Since then, the guerrilla group stepped up its attacks on security forces and oil pipelines and staged an armed strike (cf. BN of 19.08.24).¹⁰

30 September 2024

Controlled migration route through the Darién Gap

According to Colombian President Gustavo Petro, the governments of Colombia and Panama intend to establish a uniform and organised migration route through the Darién Gap, a contiguous jungle area connecting both countries. Following a meeting with Panama's President José Raúl Mulino on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on 24.09.24, Petro said that both countries want to open a legal route that is quiet and efficient and controlled by the authorities of both countries. Last year, around 520,000 people crossed the Darién Gap via various routes controlled by organised crime to reach the southern US border via Central America. According to the Panamanian authorities, 259,712 migrants arrived in Panama via the Darién Gap between January and 25.09.24. This is a decrease of 35% compared to the same period last year. The Panamanian authorities attribute the decline to stricter security measures, including the closure of some routes through the jungle and more US-supported deportations (cf. BN of 02.09.24).¹¹

25 November 2024

General Montoya banned from entering USA

On 22.11.24 the US State Department imposed bans on former Colombian general Mario Montoya Uribe and his closest family entering the country. According to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, these measures have been taken due to accusations that Montoya was involved in serious human rights violations during his time as commander-in-chief of the Colombian army between 2006 and 2008. In particular, he is alleged to have ordered extra-legal killings of civilians, which were subsequently wrongly depicted as cases of guerillas killed in combat. In the 2000s this practice, known as "falsos positivos", led to high death tolls during the internal armed conflict in Colombia when members of the armed forces received bounties for certain killing quotas. In August 2021 the Colombian chief public prosecutor's office announced that it intended to bring charges against Montoya because he was believed to be responsible for 104 murders between November 2007 and November 2008. This move was blocked by a court, however. In 2023 a special court charged Montoya with crimes against humanity in connection with the death or disappearance of 130 civilians.¹²

09 December 2024

Commander-in-chief: Armed groups exploiting peace talks to consolidate strength

In an interview with the Reuters news agency on 02.12.24 Francisco Cubides, commander-in-chief of the Colombian armed forces, warned that illegal armed groups were exploiting the government's ongoing peace negotiations to consolidate their military and economic strength. Cubides alleged that these groups had broadened their influence in particular in the areas of drug trafficking and illegal mining. According to Cubides, the military have seized 560 tonnes of cocaine - a key source of income for armed groups - in 2024 to date, highlighting the need to take action against these groups. He claimed that the groups and their support networks currently comprised more than 20,000 people - a complex crime network in which groups were fighting each other in some parts of Colombia while in other regions they were forming alliances to secure success in illegal economies. Cubides additionally stated that the groups had lost their ideological aims and were now fully focused on illegal sources of income.

Since 2022, security policy has been driven by the Paz Total strategy. The government is endeavouring to end the violence through bilateral ceasefires and negotiations with groups such as the National Liberation Army (ELN), dissident factions of the demobilised Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Clan del Golfo. The negotiations are being hampered by setbacks, such as broken ceasefires and acts of violence, however.¹³

23 December 2024

Bill to abolish child marriage passed

Congress passed a bill to abolish child marriage on 14.11.24. This removes an article in the civil code dating from 1887, under which marriages of over 14 year-olds were allowed with the parents' consent. Girls in indigenous and economically precarious rural regions are particularly vulnerable to child marriage. President Petro's signature is now all that is required for the bill to become law. The bill further provides for the introduction of a national programme to ensure a dignified life for children and adolescents, including a strategy to prevent child marriage and bonds akin to marriage.¹⁴

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Imprint

Published by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge,
90461 Nürnberg

ISSN

2943-1328

Valid as of

12/2014

Printed by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Design

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Reference source

Publikationsstelle Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
www.bamf.de/publikationen

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