



Latin America and the Caribbean

Andes

► **Colombia** “Total peace” efforts continued to face ups and downs as govt ended ceasefire with one EMC faction and agreed to another with Segunda Marquetalia; President Petro addressed UN Security Council.

Govt ended ceasefire with EMC's largest faction. Govt 16 July announced end to ceasefire with largest faction of FARC dissident group known as EMC, led by Iván Mordisco. Faction had been in talks with govt until March 2024, when latter partially suspended ceasefire in three departments along Pacific Coast; military operations will now resume in all areas where group operates. Ceasefire will remain in place with smaller EMC faction led by alias Calarcá until Oct and talks are set to continue, though they hit another snag on 23 July when military in Antioquia detained vehicle carrying Calarcá and one other commander. Parts of govt had been aware of convoy, but poor internal coordination meant local officers were not informed; EMC also broke protocol by transporting weapons in vehicle. Commanders were quickly released, but incident undermined trust between sides.

Peace efforts with Segunda Marquetalia and ELN continued. Late-June talks between govt and another dissident FARC group, Segunda Marquetalia, led to unilateral ceasefire commitment; Petro did not issue presidential decree to de-escalate military operations, however, resulting in continued hostilities throughout July. Meanwhile, UN Special Representative Ruiz-Massieu 16 July urged govt and ELN to renew ceasefire agreement, set to expire 3 Aug.

President Petro addressed UN Security Council (UNSC). Petro 11 July presented report on progress of Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement with FARC to UNSC; Diego Tovar attended, marking first time demobilised FARC member had physically joined UNSC meeting. Petro promised to strengthen cooperation among state institutions to advance implementation of key issues, such as rural reform and integration of rural territories, and proposed seven-year extension to implement deal.

In another important development. U.S. and Panama 1 July pledged to work on “closing” Darien Gap in order to curb influx of northbound migration from South America; announcement raised concerns that migrants stuck on Colombian side of Darien could be vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation by armed groups.

➡ **Ecuador Violence persisted in drug-trafficking hotspots along Pacific Coast, prompting stepped-up regional cooperation on organised crime.**

Efforts to tackle criminal violence persisted. President Noboa 2 July decreed state of exception in six provinces and one municipality with high levels of criminal violence, 17 July announced major security operation in canton of Durán, Guayas province. Security forces 3 July rescued 49 miners kidnapped by Los Lobos gang in Azuay province. In spite of killings targeting public officials, gunmen 2 July killed former Portoviejo mayoral candidate in Manabí province; 8 July killed district authority in El Oro province; and 10 July killed official from Santa Elena province's Public Prosecutor's Office. Meanwhile, National Assembly 8 July reformed penal code, notably introducing tougher sentences for crimes like drug and arms trafficking.

Authorities suspended judicial personnel in corruption probe. Judicial Council 5 July suspended seven judges and one secretary from three provincial courts as part of "Plaga" investigation into high-level ties between organised crime and judiciary.

Quito signed deals with foreign partners to boost cooperation on organised crime. Govt and EU 3 July inaugurated "Europol Unit of the National Police of Ecuador", aimed at better coordinating efforts to tackle transnational organised crime. Noboa and Peruvian President Boluarte 4 July signed agreement to strengthen bilateral relations, with emphasis on security and defence. European judicial coordination agency Eurojust 10 July signed working arrangements with Ecuador, as well as Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica and Peru, aimed at enhancing strategic cooperation in fight against organised crime.

⚡ **Venezuela Nicolás Maduro claimed victory in presidential election, triggering fraud allegations, international outcry and protests that turned deadly; popular unrest could rise in coming weeks, increasing risk of violent repression.**

Maduro claimed victory in presidential poll disputed by opposition. Venezuelans 28 July cast ballots following weeks of intense campaigning by President Maduro and opposition candidate, Edmundo González, who was leading in polls despite govt's unrestrained use of state resources and deliberate efforts to hinder opposition campaign. After polls closed, govt-controlled electoral authorities (CNE) went silent for hours before 29 July announcing that Maduro had secured over 51% of vote compared to 44% for González, but did not release vote tallies. Opposition later that day dismissed result as fraudulent, with González and banned winner of opposition primary María Corina Machado saying voting tallies gathered by opposition gave González a sweeping victory with over 70% of vote.

Chorus of international voices called for transparent vote count. Actors from region and beyond, including Brazil, Colombia, Chile and U.S., called for transparency in vote count and urged CNE to publish precinct-by-precinct polling results; several international bodies echoed these appeals, including UN and EU. U.S.-based Carter Center, invited by govt to monitor elections, 31 July said election "did not meet international stands of electoral integrity and cannot be considered democratic". Caracas 29 July recalled diplomats from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Perú, Panamá, Dominican Republic and Uruguay in response to their scepticism about results and

demanded they reciprocate. Meanwhile, Cuba, Nicaragua, Russia, Bolivia and Honduras congratulated Maduro on his victory.

Protests erupted but were forcefully put down by security forces, leaving 17 dead. Spontaneous demonstrations 29 July erupted across country in response to disputed result, with protesters reportedly toppling statues of former President Hugo Chávez, burning campaign posters of Maduro and attempting to block roads. Protesters also flooded streets of capital Caracas as police and military deployed in large numbers, accompanied by pro-govt para-police forces known as “collectives”; mostly peaceful demonstrations turned violent as police used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds heading for presidential palace. As of 31 July, 17 deaths had been reported along with over 1,000 arrests. State repression will likely intensify in coming weeks should protests persist.

Central America and Mexico

➔ **El Salvador** **Authorities renewed state of exception amid continued concern about arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment under measure.**

Authorities renewed state of exception amid allegations of human rights violations. Legislative Assembly 8 July extended state of exception for 30 days as concerns about abuses continued. Notably, NGO Human Rights Watch 16 July released report documenting “severe” human rights violations under state of exception, including “arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment against children”. NGO Cristosal 10 July said at least 261 people have died in custody since measure came into place. Meanwhile, Minister of Security 24 July called upon Legislative Assembly to enact more reforms to penal code, including extension of pre-trial detention.

Bukele made threats in response to steep inflation. President Bukele 5 July warned that heavy-handed approach used to address gang violence could be applied to wholesalers and distributors, who he blamed for sharp rise in prices of basic goods. While these increases are not enough to jail individuals under state of exception, Bukele alleged wholesalers engage in bribery, contraband and tax evasion, which could justify jail time.

➔ **Mexico** **President-elect Claudia Sheinbaum began appointing ministers as ruling MORENA party pushed for constitutional reforms; U.S. authorities apprehended Sinaloa Cartel leaders.**

Sheinbaum began selecting candidates for key ministerial positions. Following her landslide electoral victory on 2 June, President-elect Sheinbaum 4 July designated Omar García Harfuch, public security secretary in Mexico City under Sheinbaum’s mayorship, as future security minister. Other key appointments reflected efforts to satisfy different MORENA factions and keep party stable after outgoing President López Obrador’s departure. Meanwhile, López Obrador and Sheinbaum continued work to enact constitutional reforms, which include overhaul of judiciary and eradication of several autonomous oversight bodies. While MORENA won majorities in both houses of legislature, it is three seats shy of super majority in senate needed for constitutional reforms, prompting party leaders in July to begin negotiations with opposition senators to secure votes.

Criminal violence persisted at high levels following election. Violence continued to intensify in some areas, notably Guerrero state, as criminal groups and state forces renegotiated power arrangements following poll. Notably, National Public Security System data released 9 July found that June was deadliest month in 2024, with 23% increase in homicides since May; Acapulco city saw heavy violence amid competition between Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and Los Rusos criminal group. In Michoacán state, journalists and inhabitants early July denounced repeated CJNG drone attacks in Aguila municipality; clashes between soldiers and alleged criminals 6 July killed seven in Tangancícuaro municipality. In Sinaloa state, confrontations 8 July between security forces and Sinaloa Cartel left four dead in Badiraguato municipality, Cartel's core turf.

U.S. arrested two Sinaloa Cartel leaders. U.S. authorities 26 July detained Vicente "El Mayo" Zambada, head of Sinaloa Cartel, and Joaquín Guzmán López, son of former Sinaloa leader Joaquín Guzmán Loera, in state of Texas, U.S., where they had flown by private jet. With Mexican govt 27 July saying it had no prior knowledge of U.S.'s plans, rumours began circulating about how arrests materialised, including possible betrayal from within cartel or pre-arranged surrender. Arrests could trigger factional fighting in coming weeks and months, particularly if narrative of an internal betrayal gains traction.

➔ **Nicaragua Govt continued to target civil society, journalists, political opponents and Indigenous communities.**

Clampdown on political figures continued. President Ortega's political purges persisted, targeting not only opponents but individuals previously considered loyal to regime; notably, authorities mid-July arrested several high-ranking officials on corruption charges, including Vice Chancellor Arlette Marengo. Meanwhile, Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners 16 July reported that Nicaragua holds at least 147 political prisoners and that they are living in "deplorable" conditions.

Crackdown on civil society, press and Indigenous communities persisted. Regime 9 July shuttered one Catholic radio station and 12 NGOs. Foundation for Freedom of Expression and Democracy's 10 July report documented 34 cases of attacks on press freedom and 17 journalists exiled April-June 2024. According to watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), authorities 12 July raided home of journalist and activist Fabiola Tercero Castro, who had been under house arrest; RSF said Castro was still missing by end of month. In session with Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Indigenous rights groups 11 July reported 643 violations of Indigenous rights, including forced displacement, arbitrary detentions, torture and killings, in first half of 2024.

Caribbean

➔ **Haiti Kenya-led security mission continued deploying to Haiti as debates about talks with gangs heated up; tensions rose between PM Conille and Transitional Presidential Council (TPC).**

Kenya-led security mission continued to deploy without major spike in violence. Following late-June arrival of 200 Kenyan officers from foreign security mission, second contingent 16 July landed in capital Port-au-Prince and began conducting

joint patrols and targeted missions against gangs. While their deployment triggered no major gang offensive, violence nonetheless persisted in several areas. Notably, mayor of Gressier town, south west of Port-au-Prince, 8 July stated that gangs now control around 75% of town amid ongoing clashes. In Ganthier town east of capital, members of 400 Mawozo gang 21 July set fire to police station, forcing thousands to flee. Meanwhile, PM Conille 17 July announced state of emergency in 14 gang-controlled communes in Ouest and Artibonite departments; police chief Rameau Normil 30 July announced police had subsequently killed 104 gang members during security operations in these areas.

Gang spokesperson floated possible dialogue with govt. Spokesperson for Viv Ansanm gang coalition, Jimmy 'Barbecue' Chérizier, 5 July said gangs would consider laying down arms and choosing one citizen from diaspora to facilitate dialogue with authorities; five prominent civil society organisations 11 July voiced opposition to any dialogue between govt and gangs. Meanwhile, gang leaders from capital's Cité Soleil neighbourhood who are part of Viv Ansanm 24 July claimed to have reached peace agreement with Ti Gabriel, leader of Nan Brooklyn gang, which had cooperated with Viv Ansanm gangs but not fully integrated into the coalition; following agreement, gangs removed walls separating their territories.

Tensions grew between PM Conille and TPC. Public dispute erupted between TPC and Conille around latter's 28 June-5 July travel to U.S., where he met several top officials, including Sec State Antony Blinken, and addressed UN Security Council; when Conille 8 July met with TPC upon his return, members reportedly insisted diplomatic duties fall within remit of presidency, not prime minister. Meanwhile, secretariat of TPC around 8 July started sending letters to religious groups, workers and other civil society associations, asking them to nominate representatives for provisional electoral council.