



## Latin America and the Caribbean

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### Andes

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➔ **Bolivia** Failed coup attempt orchestrated by former army chief left Bolivia reeling.

One day after being stripped of his command, former Army Chief Gen. Zúñiga and allied members of military 26 June took up positions in capital La Paz's Plaza Murillo, promising to "restore democracy" as armoured vehicle rammed door of govt palace and soldiers stormed building. Footage from within palace showed President Arce ordering Zúñiga and his allies to stand down, as leaders from region and beyond rushed to condemn actions. Within hours, Zúñiga and allied soldiers had withdrawn, presumably because their reinforcements did not arrive, bringing attempted coup to abrupt end. Police forces same day arrested Zúñiga and his alleged co-conspirator, former Navy Vice Adm. Salvador, though not before Zúñiga claimed Arce had ordered him to stage coup in attempt to boost his popularity; Arce 27 June denied allegation. Attorney General 26 June announced formal investigation into Zúñiga and "all the other participants".

➔ **Colombia** FARC-EMC splinters continued to escalate attacks along Pacific Coast as peace talks with ELN remained in disarray; govt opened negotiations with FARC dissident group Segunda Marquetalia.

*Hostilities between military and FARC-EMC splinters intensified.* Splinter groups of dissident FARC faction known as EMC stepped up attacks along Pacific Coast, targeting police stations, launching car bombs and improvised explosives, and striking buildings with armed drones. Apparent EMC splinter members 16 June shot at car transporting father and nephew of VP Francia Márquez in Jamundí town, Valle de Cauca department. President Petro 8 June ruled out any peace process with splinters amid violent attacks, saying "the order is to neutralise EMC" in Cauca department. Next round of dialogue with EMC factions still at negotiating table, led by alias Calarcá, is set tentatively for early July; sides 14 June inaugurated commission in Meta, aimed at stimulating rural development in areas of department under Calarcá's control.

*ELN statement following group's VI Congress contained few surprises.* National Liberation Army (ELN) held its VI Congress in secret, 17 June released statement largely reiterating insurgency's longstanding talking points. Communiqué said it will continue peace talks, while blaming current crisis in negotiations on alleged govt non-compliance; it also failed to clarify key public concerns, including whether group will continue kidnapping for ransom and if it is contemplating laying down arms.

Group voiced support for Constituent Assembly, controversial idea floated by Petro in order to enact constitutional reforms.

*Govt opened talks with Segunda Marquetalia.* Talks between govt and dissident FARC faction Segunda Marquetalia, which wields significant territorial control along border with Ecuador, 24-29 June took place in Venezuelan capital Caracas. Negotiations focused on conflict de-escalation and improving conditions for civilians; importantly, Segunda Marquetalia agreed to share coordinates of its troops to avoid armed confrontations. Legal uncertainty clouds process, however, as many in leadership are former signatories to 2016 peace accord who subsequently returned to arms.

*In other important developments.* U.S. court 10 June ordered Chiquita Brands International to pay \$38.3mn in compensation to families of eight victims assassinated by paramilitary groups in Colombia in early 2000s. Congress 14 June passed govt's pension reform.

➡ **Ecuador Constitutional Court again overturned President Noboa's state of exception amid ongoing criminal violence; efforts to tackle corruption continued.**

*Judiciary overturned state of exception as violence persisted in coastal provinces.* Constitutional Court 13 June declared state of exception decreed by President Noboa in late May unconstitutional, second time judiciary has overturned his decree. So-called Security Block, made up of military and police, 15 June criticised decision, arguing states of exception have yielded positive results. Meanwhile, insecurity persisted in strategic drug trafficking enclaves along Pacific Coast. Notably, unknown assailants 2 June killed alternate Congressman Cristhian Nieto and his wife in Manta city (Manabí Province); Noboa 3 June ordered stepped-up security presence in city to contain rising violence. U.S. Treasury Department 6 June announced sanctions against "Los Lobos" gang and its leader alias "Pipo", saying group had "emerged as Ecuador's largest drug trafficking organisation" and is responsible for worsening violence.

*Efforts to tackle corruption continued.* As part of "Metastasis" and "Purge" investigations into high-level corruption across Ecuador, Judicial Council 14 June dismissed seven judges from Guayas Province, prosecutor and secretary for alleged involvement in organised crime. Police 29 June arrested over a dozen individuals, including judges, attorneys and govt officials, in connection with Plaga Case, another high-level probe into ties between organised crime, govt and judiciary.

➡ **Venezuela Tensions mounted in run-up to July presidential poll as Maduro govt, unwilling to relinquish power, continued to manipulate electoral conditions; outright fraud remains possible.**

*Opposition candidate's wide lead in polls raised concerns about govt response.* As July presidential poll drew closer, most credible polling organisations gave opposition coalition Unitary Platform's candidate Edmundo González large lead over President Maduro. Delphos pollster Félix Seijas 4 June cautioned that his surveys show Maduro with "ceiling" of around 30% of vote (20 points behind González), meaning govt's focus will likely be on discouraging opposition voter participation in order to win. This may require drastic steps, such as ban of Unitary Platform's ticket

and/or González' candidacy, which would likely throw opposition into disarray. Manipulation of electoral conditions means most likely outcome of poll is victory for Maduro who, along with seven other candidates, 20 June signed agreement to respect results; González refused. In this event, protests are likely following announcement of results, though govt previously vowed to respond harshly, which could shrink their size.

*Authorities reduced external election observation.* Atop these risks, electoral authorities' (CNE) late-May cancellation of EU electoral observation mission further indicated govt will prioritise winning poll over recovering international recognition and sanctions relief; opposition-linked CNE member Juan Carlos Delpino 11 June said council president made decision unilaterally, likely on instructions of National Assembly president Jorge Rodríguez; Delpino added that CNE had not met since March. NGO Carter Center and UN 19, 25 June confirmed they will send small observation teams to monitor voting. Deputy FM for Latin America Rander Peña 18 June said govt had invited BRICS+ bloc, including China and Russia, to observe election and confirmed Caracas' intention to soon join bloc.

*Crackdown on opposition figures persisted.* Banned opposition candidate María Corina Machado 17 June accused govt of "criminalising the electoral route", saying 37 opposition activists had been arrested in 2024, four of them in previous week. González same day said govt was creating a "hostile atmosphere" for election, while civil society leaders continued to spotlight security forces' routine targeting of activists.

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## **Central America and Mexico**

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➔ **El Salvador** Bukele was sworn in for second presidential term, promising economic growth and clampdown on corruption; authorities again renewed state of exception.

*Bukele vowed to improve economy and tackle corruption in inauguration speech.* Bukele was sworn in as president 1 June despite ban on consecutive re-election in El Salvador's constitution. CID Gallup poll 11 June indicated Bukele's popularity rating stood at 92%, highest of all Latin American leaders. In his inauguration speech, Bukele promised to focus on strengthening economy and fighting corruption. Several international representatives attended ceremony, including Argentina's President Milei and Donald Trump Jr.; high-level delegation led by U.S. Homeland Security Secretary and other senior U.S. officials also attended, reflecting shift toward more conciliatory approach in U.S. policy, likely due to concerns about immigration ahead of U.S. presidential election.

*Authorities once more renewed state of exception.* Legislative Assembly 6 June extended state of exception for 27th time, with 57 out of 60 members voting for renewal despite concerns about human rights. Meanwhile, authorities 11 June transferred 2,000 inmates to El Salvador's mega-prison, el Centro de Confinamiento para el Terrorismo, now at 40% capacity; total prison population stands at 108,200.

➔ **Honduras** President Castro announced new measures to tackle violent crime.

*Castro sought to crack down on violent crime.* Amid mounting public pressure, President Castro 14 June announced series of measures to tackle violent crime, known as “Crime Solution Plan”, which entails: deployment of security forces to municipalities with high crime levels and operations to destroy coca plantations; construction of new “mega-prison”; and reforms to penal code so that gang members who commit specific offences can be classified as terrorists. Castro has sought to emulate “mano dura”, or “iron-fist” approach toward gangs of her El Salvadoran counterpart in hopes of reducing violence, though her efforts have failed to produce similar results.

*In another important development.* U.S. court 26 June sentenced former President Hernandez to 45 years in prison for crimes related to drug trafficking, with prosecutors accusing him of running Honduras like a “narco-state”.

➡ **Mexico Claudia Sheinbaum won presidential election wracked by record levels of violence; President López Obrador set to enact controversial reforms before stepping down.**

*Claudia Sheinbaum won election amid record levels of violence.* Ruling MORENA party candidate Claudia Sheinbaum 2 June won election with about 60% of vote, becoming Mexico’s first woman president. Chief opponent Xóchitl Gálvez 13 June formally contested results, alleging use of state apparatus to support Sheinbaum, unequal competition and organised crime involvement, though allegation unlikely to affect result. According to 4 June report by civil society organisation Causa en Común, these elections were most violent in nation’s modern history: thirty-seven candidates or aspiring candidates were assassinated during campaign period, while two voters were killed at polling stations.

*Criminal violence plagued multiple states.* Insecurity remained rampant, partly as criminal groups sought leverage in upcoming negotiations with new govt. Notably, armed assailants 3 June killed mayor of Cotija town, Michoacán state; 17 June killed newly-elected mayor in Copala town, Guerrero state; 22 June killed outgoing mayor of Malinaltepec city, Guerrero state. Violence in Chiapas intensified amid rivalry between Jalisco Cartel – New Generation (CNJG) and Sinaloa Cartel, with clashes 8-9 June forcing over 4,000 people to flee Tila town. Massacre in León city, Guanajuato state, 9 June left six people dead; CNJG denied role in attack as officials 14 June announced arrest of five National Guard agents for potential involvement.

*López Obrador vowed to press ahead with controversial reforms.* Outgoing President López Obrador 7 June announced plans to capitalise on Sept overlap with new MORENA supermajority in Congress to push through constitutional reforms. Among other things, López Obrador plans to introduce elections for judicial figures, dismantle autonomous public bodies and strengthen role of Armed Forces through National Guard; critics argue they could undermine checks and balances. Meanwhile, change to Amnesty Law enacted 14 June gave president authority to grant amnesty for any crime, including human rights violations.

*Migration flows persisted at high levels.* National Institute of Migration 16 June reported nearly 1.4mn irregular migrants traveling through Mexico Jan-May 2024. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 13 June criticised use of armed forces in migration control.

➔ **Nicaragua Stifling of dissent and poor treatment of political prisoners continued, and regime authorised foreign troop deployment to support humanitarian situation.**

*Crackdown on dissent and poor treatment of political prisoners continued.* Govt 11 June cancelled legal status of fifteen NGOs, 24 June closed fifteen more. Local media 14 June published report revealing govt had imposed arbitrary fines of up to 20,000 córdobas (\$500) on evangelical leaders as suppression of religious institutions continued. Meanwhile, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 11 June condemned “deplorable” prison conditions and urged regime to protect political prisoners’ “lives and integrity”. Organization of American States 27 June adopted resolution urging immediate release of political prisoners in Nicaragua and easing of repression of church members.

*Govt approved foreign troop entry and continued to forge new alliances.* National Assembly 4 June authorised entry of troops from U.S., Russia, Venezuela and Cuba to provide emergency humanitarian assistance until 31 Dec 2024, specifying that Russian and Venezuelan soldiers will also assist in fight against drug trafficking and organised crime. Meanwhile, regime 7 June reaffirmed its intention to join BRICS and 11 June formalised re-establishment of diplomatic relations with North Korea amid efforts to diversify alliances in face of Western sanctions. President Ortega 22 June appointed ambassador to Afghanistan, formalising establishment of diplomatic relations with Taliban authorities.

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## **Caribbean**

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➔ **Cuba Russian vessels docked in capital Havana.**

Foreign Ministry 7 June announced four Russian vessels would “pay an official visit” to port in Havana 12-17 June, emphasising that none of them carried nuclear weapons and that “their stop-over in our country does not represent any threat to the region”. U.S. officials played down significance of their arrival, though U.S. submarine 13 June entered Guantanamo Bay in “routine port visit”; Canadian patrol vessel 14-17 June also conducted port visit to Havana. Reasons for visit remained unclear, though some noted actions came weeks after U.S. President Biden authorised limited use of U.S. weapons on Russian soil to defend Ukraine’s Kharkiv region, which prompted Russian President Putin 5 June to threaten “asymmetric response” (see Russia).

➔ **Haiti Kenya-led multinational security mission began arriving in Haiti to help quell surging gang violence, while PM Conille assumed office and formed new govt.**

*First personnel from Kenya-led security mission landed in Haiti.* First wave of police officers from much-anticipated foreign security mission 25 June arrived in Haiti. Mission faces enormous task of helping a police force riddled with corruption stem rampant gang violence while ensuring protection of civilians in urban warfare. Earlier, human rights group Amnesty International 4 June expressed concern about lack of transparency on measures taken to ensure respect for human rights during

operations and called for all safeguards to be implemented, including transparent complaint mechanisms for timely investigations into allegations of misconduct.

*Gang violence continued as police chief stepped down.* Gang alliance known as Viv Ansanm launched more attacks, though scaled back violence in days before mission arrived. Notably, gang members 9 June murdered three police officers in Delmas commune of capital Port-au-Prince after their armoured vehicle fell into ditch dug by gangs. Gang violence also affected parts of Artibonite department, Haiti's breadbasket. Notably, Ti Bwadam gang attacks 14-15 June in Terre-Neuve and Lagon communes killed around twelve people. Viv Ansanm's self-appointed spokesperson Jimmy 'Barbecue' Chérizier 23 June urged PM Conille to refrain from conducting operations against gangs and instead to engage in dialogue; Conille 25 June responded, saying gangs must lay down their arms and recognise state authority. International Organization for Migration 18 June reported 60% increase in displacement since March. Meanwhile, police high command 14 June dismissed its director Frantz Elbé, replacing him 19 June with Normil Rameau, former police director under President Moïse.

*PM Conille assumed office and appointed new govt.* Garry Conille was officially installed as prime minister 3 June; one week later, official gazette 11 June published names of fourteen new cabinet members. All members of Transitional Presidential Council reportedly participated in appointment of ministers while Conille selected heads of five most important ministries. Conille 12 June promised govt would prioritise fight against corruption in order to restore Haitians' confidence in their leaders and institutions.