



Latin America and the Caribbean

Andes

↓ **Colombia** Security situation in south west sharply deteriorated amid violent armed group attacks on state targets and clashes between rival FARC dissident factions.

FARC dissident violence escalated along Pacific coast. Clashes between security forces and splinter group of dissident Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) faction known as EMC accelerated along Pacific Coast, leaving dozens dead. Argelia municipality (Cauca department) witnessed multiple clashes early May as military tried to seize control of Caño de Micay trafficking corridor. EMC 20 May launched series of coordinated assaults against state targets in south west: fronts in Cauca attacked police station in Morales town, while bomb exploded in Jamundí town (Valle de Cauca department). Security forces throughout May warned of EMC expansion into previously calm departments of Tolima and Quindío. Meanwhile, skirmishes 24 May erupted between rival EMC factions, Frente 57 and Dagoberto Ramos, in rural area of Toribío municipality (Cauca), apparently linked to Frente 57 offensive to capture Indigenous lands in Tacueyo and San Francisco.

Peace efforts with ELN struggled as group clashed with rival outfits. Govt and ELN 25 May signed agreement in Venezuelan capital Caracas, charting roadmap for public participation in peace talks. Accord generated cautious optimism at tense moment in negotiations. Notably, ELN 6 May said it would restart kidnapping for ransom, while confrontations with other armed groups escalated, likely impacting ELN's calculations at talks. Insurgency faced pressure from Gaitanista Army of Colombia (EGC) (previously Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia) in southern Bolívar state, one of ELN's gold mining strongholds, with UN 14 May reporting significant civilian harm due to clashes. Local front Comuneros del Sur 7 May also announced separation from ELN and participation in dialogue initiative in Nariño department as separate organisation, reflecting broader trend toward armed group fragmentation across Colombia.

EGC sought to capture Sierra Nevada mountains. EGC accelerated push to seize Sierra Nevada mountains, Magdalena Department (north), from local outlet known as 'Los Pachenos'; control of area would provide key strategic refuge for group, and connect trafficking route from Atlantic coastline to Venezuelan border. UN 6 May said skirmishes confined 300 members of ethnic Wiwa population.

➡ **Ecuador** President Noboa announced state of emergency to counter criminal violence as probes into official corruption continued; govt closed consulates in Mexico.

Noboa decreed state of emergency in seven provinces. Criminal violence remained high in drug trafficking hotspots, such as Guayas and Manabí provinces. Notably, in Guayas, authorities in port city of Guayaquil 9 May recorded nineteen violent deaths, including massacre of six people in neighbourhood of Nueva Prosperina district, one of Ecuador's most violent areas; and in canton of Durán, local gang 14 May killed six. In Manabí, attackers 25-26 May killed seven across Manta, Montecristi and Jaramijó cities. President Noboa 22 May declared state of emergency in Guayas, El Oro, Santa Elena, Manabí, Sucumbios, Orellana and Los Rios provinces, as well as one area of Azuay province, citing rise in violent deaths and other crimes. Meanwhile, anti-corruption efforts continued. Notably, Police and Prosecutor's Office 14 May arrested seven police officers and two civilians for their possible participation in corruption network that marketed and transported fuel used in illegal mining.

Fallout with Mexico over embassy raid continued. Relations with Mexico continued to deteriorate after latter severed ties with Quito over embassy raid and arrest of former VP Jorge Glas in April. Foreign Ministry 16 May closed its consulates in Mexico, having late April announced it was filing lawsuit against Mexico before International Court of Justice for granting Glas asylum. FM Sommerfeld 28 May expressed willingness for dialogue, which Mexico's FM next day rejected.

↓ **Venezuela Authorities cancelled invitation to EU election observation mission, dealing major blow to hopes of relatively free and fair poll, as opposition and govt campaigning gained momentum.**

Govt-controlled election authority rejected EU election observation mission. National Electoral Council (CNE) President Elvis Amoroso 28 May announced it had withdrawn its invitation to EU to send observation mission for July presidential poll, arguing it would be 'immoral' to allow EU participation given its "neo-colonial practices and interventionism". Govt-controlled National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez had previously urged authority do this, saying that while govt was committed under Oct 2023 Barbados Agreement to invite EU observers, this was conditional on impartiality and respect for Venezuelan sovereignty, and claimed it was "evident that the European Union favours the candidate of the United States" (referring to opposition coalition Unitary Platform's candidate, Edmundo González); Rodríguez cited EU's 13 May decision to maintain all individual sanctions except those targeting several current and former CNE members. CNE's move indicated govt may be planning to tighten conditions ahead of poll.

Unitary Platform launched 'double-headed' election campaign. Govt and opposition campaigned hard throughout May as elections drew closer. Unitary Platform's original candidate, María Corina Machado, who is banned from standing for elected office, urged voters at well-attended rallies to support González, who does not have political infrastructure to engage in an intense campaign of his own. Pair 18 May appeared in public together for first time at rally in La Victoria town, González' birthplace, amid concerns he is perceived to be under Machado campaign's control. As in other places Machado has campaigned, ruling party same day held parallel rally in La Victoria.

Oil companies scrambled to obtain licences following partial sanctions snapback. After U.S. announced in April that it would not renew General Licence 44, under which Venezuela could sell oil and gas on open market, U.S. Treasury Department

22 May announced up to 50 firms had requested individual licences to continue doing business with state oil corporation PDVSA, which is permitted under new GL-44a licence.

Central America and Mexico

➔ **El Salvador** Authorities renewed state of exception and sought to prosecute alleged MS-13 gang members en masse; human rights organisations criticised late April amendment to constitution.

Authorities once again renewed state of exception. Legislative Assembly 9 May extended state of exception for 30 days, while National Defence Minister Rene Merino Monroy 14 May said authorities had arrested over 80,000 gang members since measure's inception. President Bukele 25 May announced deployment of over 3,000 security officers to several neighbourhoods of Apopa city amid allegations of gang activities. Attorney General's Office made multiple requests throughout month to try thousands of alleged Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang members in various groups, where they would be jointly prosecuted for crimes such as money laundering, illegal possession of firearms and drug trafficking. Concerns about human rights continued, with NGO Humanitarian Legal Aid 27 May announcing they had registered 301 deaths in state custody.

Human rights organisations criticised constitutional amendment. Multiple human rights groups criticised late April amendment to Article 248 of Constitution, which allows a single legislature to pass constitutional reforms with two thirds of vote, rather than two separate Legislative Assemblies. Notably, Amnesty International 6 May warned amendments "could undermine human rights in the future and limit people's opportunities to participate in public affairs". Group of citizens 13 May urged Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice to declare reform unconstitutional. Observers have predicted Assembly may next authorise indefinite presidential re-election.

➔🇲🇽 **Mexico** Ruling MORENA party's presidential candidate on course to win June poll amid fears of violence on and around election day; U.S. and Mexico strengthened cooperation on migration.

MORENA's Claudia Sheinbaum poised to win election amid high levels of political violence. Ruling MORENA party's candidate Claudia Sheinbaum looked poised to defeat Xóchitl Gálvez of PAN-PRI-PRD opposition alliance in 2 June election, with over 20-point lead in polls (await next month's edition for full coverage). Gálvez 13 May accused President López Obrador of influencing elections by openly supporting Sheinbaum from presidential podium; López Obrador 14 May rejected claims. Meanwhile, political violence remained rampant. Notably, armed individuals 11 May killed eight in Huitzilac municipality, Morelos state; state security delegate 17 May said 34.4% uptick in homicides in Morelos Jan-April 2024 compared to same period in 2023 owed to multiple crime groups seeking to influence elections. Attackers 16 May killed Partido Popular Chiapaneco mayoral candidate for La Concordia municipality and six others following campaign event. Unknown assailants 27 May attacked PRI mayoral candidate for Hueyapoxtla. Violence could escalate on and around election day.

Criminal violence continued at high levels. After April witnessed highest number of homicides in 2024, with 2,349 officially recorded cases, armed confrontations and killings continued. Notably, in Chiapas State's Chicomusuelo municipality, confrontations 10-14 May between Sinaloa Cartel and Jalisco New Generation Cartel, two main groups competing for control of state, left eleven dead. In Michoacán state, army 9 May killed ten alleged Jalisco Cartel members in Tocumbo municipality. In Guanajuato state, search collective 16 May announced it had discovered 21 bodies in clandestine graves in Abasolo municipality.

U.S. and Mexico stepped up efforts to curb migration. According to data published 4 May, number of migrant detentions in Mexico tripled Jan-March compared with same period in 2023, though govt said overall migration had decreased. U.S. authorities 15 May reported that detentions at U.S.-Mexico border decreased by 6% in April compared to March, credited tougher measures introduced by Mexico. Announcement followed late April agreement between U.S. President Biden and López Obrador to strengthen collaboration on migration.

➔ **Nicaragua Silencing of civil society, political figures and religious groups continued; U.S. announced more sanctions on regime and affiliated companies.**

Crackdown on dissent continued as authorities targeted Ortega's brother. Retired general Humberto Ortega, President Ortega's brother, 19 May called Ortega's rule "dictatorial" during interview with news outlet *Infobae*; police same day reportedly surrounded his house and confiscated his devices, 21 May announced instalment of medical unit, in move critics say amounts to house arrest. Meanwhile, repression of civil society and religious freedom continued. According to U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom's annual report published 1 May, Nicaragua was one of seventeen countries designated as "of particular concern" due to "severe violations of religious freedom". Ortega regime 2 May closed fifteen NGOs, including four affiliated with evangelical church, 21 May disbanded fifteen more; govt 13, 24 May prohibited public processions in honour of Catholic saints.

U.S. imposed new sanctions. U.S. 15 May introduced new sanctions against regime and affiliated companies for human rights abuses and complicity in migrant smuggling. It imposed visa restrictions on over 250 govt members for "supporting attacks on human rights", and sanctioned two mining companies and Russian-operated military training centre in capital Managua, which it said has helped govt crackdown on civil society. U.S. Departments of State, Homeland Security and Treasury 15 May issued international alert to airlines and charter flight companies, warning about exploitation of transportation services by migrant trafficking networks.

Caribbean

➔ **Cuba U.S. removed Cuba from list of countries not fully cooperating on counterterrorism efforts.**

U.S. State Department 15 May removed Cuba from list of countries deemed uncooperative on counterterrorism efforts, known as Not Fully Cooperating

Countries (NFCC) list; other countries include North Korea, Iran, Syria and Venezuela. Justifying decision, State Department cited resumption of law enforcement cooperation between Washington and Havana in 2023, and Colombia's decision to suspend arrest warrants for National Liberation Army commanders living in Cuba (meaning Havana was no longer refusing to collaborate with Bogotá on extradition requests). Cuba, however, remains designated as a state sponsor of terrorism. FM Bruno Rodríguez same day welcomed removal from NFCC list but urged U.S. to end "Cuba's arbitrary and unjust inclusion in the list of State sponsors of terrorism".

➡🔥 **Haiti Kenya's president announced security mission would begin deploying in June, raising risk of violent gang response; Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) named Gary Conille as Prime Minister.**

Violence continued, with gangs notably targeting police stations. In bid to block deployment of Kenya-led security mission, gang alliance known as Viv Ansanm continued their attacks in capital Port-au-Prince and other cities, displacing thousands. Notably, UN humanitarian agency 4 May reported that 2 May attack on Delmas commune of Port-au-Prince forced over 3,700 people to flee. Gangs 10-11 May stormed police station in Gressier town, 20km south west of Port-au-Prince; police 12 May regained control, while International Organization for Migration next day said gang violence had forced around 4,500 residents from area. Gangs 17-18 May demolished Croix-des-Bouquets police station on northern outskirts of capital; 21 May torched police station in Cesselesse area. Gangs 21 May partially destroyed Martissant's police station, 22-23 May demolished police station in Grand Ravine. Meanwhile, police 2 May reopened roads to Varreux oil terminal, blocked by gangs since 22 April; Toussaint-Louverture airport in Port-au-Prince 20 May reopened after nearly three-month closure.

Deployment of Kenya-led security mission in June could fuel violence. Preparations for multinational security mission continued, with Kenyan President Ruto 24 May announcing first batch of police would arrive in June despite hopes it would deploy around 23 May to coincide with his state visit to U.S. Contingent could be met with fierce gang attacks upon arrival.

TPC agreed on decision-making norms and chose new Prime Minister. Newly-established TPC late April-early May held negotiations after it emerged that four of the seven groups which make up body had agreed to always vote in unison and thus control council's decisions. Majority bloc 7 May agreed to minimum of five votes for all major decisions, namely appointments to key posts, and five-month rotating presidency. Council 12 May issued call for candidates to take over from interim PM Michel Patrick Boisvert; TPC 28 May selected UN children's agency regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Garry Conille, as new PM.