

Latin America and the Caribbean

↓ **Colombia** Amid high levels of violence, three former senior commanders of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) announced return to armed struggle. Group, including former chief FARC negotiator in peace process Iván Márquez, announced via video released 29 Aug their return to armed combat, highest ranking figures of ex-guerrillas to have reneged on 2016 peace accord; Márquez claimed video recorded in Inírida region of eastern Colombia, close to Venezuela border, but intelligence reports suggested group may be based in Venezuela. Other demobilised leaders of guerrillas distanced themselves from schism. In Pacific region, fighting continued to spread, particularly affecting indigenous communities with Public Ombudsman 8 Aug announcing seventeen armed groups fighting for control of region; unidentified attackers 10 Aug killed indigenous leaders Kedvin Mestizo Coicue and Eugenio Tenorio in Caloto municipality, Cauca (south west). Levels of violence against social leaders and activists remained high, including early Aug killings of community leaders José Eduardo Tumbó, also in Caloto, and of Enrique Güejía and Gersain Yatacué, coordinators of the indigenous guard in municipality of Toribío; indigenous communities in northern Cauca 11 Aug declared state of emergency. UN Office on Drugs and Crime 2 Aug released report detailing govt had reduced amount of land occupied by illicit crops by 2,000 hectares in 2018 after five years of reported increases, but stating that cocaine production increased in same period. U.S. 8 Aug certified Colombia as cooperating with counter-narcotic measures and said govt “leading efforts to restart a Colombian-led aerial eradication program”. Formal timeframe of existence of 24 reintegration camps for ex-FARC members ended 15 Aug; Colombian Agency for Reincorporation 6 Aug announced govt will continue providing security and financial support for additional year in order to support over 3,000 ex-combatants still in these zones. Amid regional concern over fallout of Venezuela crisis, govt 5 Aug passed degree granting citizenship to Venezuelan children born in Colombia after Aug 2015, giving 24,000 stateless children Colombian nationality.

↑ **El Salvador** Lowest monthly homicide rate this century marked improved security situation, though debate continued over whether this was due to President Bukele’s anti-gang measures. Following late-July announcement of third phase of anti-gang “Territorial Control Plan” which saw measures extended to all departments and foresees \$210mn of technical and technological equipment to security forces, govt insisted plan had helped reduce homicides though some security experts said assessment was premature; national police reported 131 murders in Aug, lowest rate since 2000; since Bukele’s 1 Jun swearing in, daily murder average dropped from nine to around four. Bukele 8 Aug pledged to fight corruption and promised to create International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES) before 1 Sept; civil society welcomed initiative but warned it was being undertaken in secretive way without consultation; Organization of American States Sec Gen Almagro and VP Ulloa 30 Aug announced creation of technical mission to establish CICIES. Amid regional focus on migration and following late July U.S.-Guatemala “Safe Third Country” agreement requiring migrants who pass through Guatemala to first seek asylum there instead of U.S., acting U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan 1 Aug stated U.S. will pursue similar

agreement with El Salvador. Police 3 Aug detained two people, including secretary in parliament, in Anguiatú on Guatemala border, on charges of human trafficking.

➡ **Guatemala** Alejandro Giammattei won second round of presidential election. In run-off vote 11 Aug, Giammattei of Vamos party won 58% of vote, beating 42% for Sandra Torres of Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE), turnout 42%; Giammattei will assume office Jan 2020. Giammattei 11 Aug reiterated he will not renew International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) whose mandate ends 3 Sept, instead creating new anti-corruption commission. Attorney General 13 Aug announced creation of 60-person technical unit to assist new anti-corruption body “Special Attorney against Impunity”, with CICIG spokesman raising concerns that unit does not contain any CICIG members. Following July U.S.-Guatemala “Safe Third Country” agreement requiring migrants who pass through country to first seek asylum there instead of U.S., Constitutional Court (CC) received official copy of accord from govt 9 Aug, in order for CC to make final decision on previous provisional ruling which blocked signing of agreement without congressional approval; Giammattei 13 Aug stated country had neither resources nor security to act as safe third country and reaffirmed deal must have U.S. and Guatemalan congressional approval. Minister of Interior Enrique Degenhart 22 Aug signed security cooperation agreement with U.S. on sharing biometric information of foreigners in or passing through Guatemala.

➡ **Haiti** Political tensions remained high amid opposition attempts to impeach President Moïse. Parliament 2 Aug announced 7 Aug session to review impeachment motion against Moïse on accusations of treason over his alleged involvement in embezzlement of PetroCaribe (alliance giving Caribbean states access to cheap Venezuelan oil) funds; Chamber of Deputies president Gary Bodeau called off session citing lack of respect for parliamentary rules and 12 Aug called off further session over security concerns; in 21-22 Aug vote, 53 of 61 MPs voted down impeachment measure, with 58 members abstaining. Local media 11 Aug reported PM Michel ready to present his govt plan to Chamber of Deputies in first round of ratification process, though some in opposition continued to insist on Moïse’s resignation before any ratification. Public unrest continued with demonstrators late July until early Aug protesting against Washington’s support for Moïse outside U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince; embassy security 6 Aug reported gunfire in immediate vicinity of staff housing compound. Amid gang-related violence, national police 8 Aug announced 656 new officers.

➡ **Honduras** Civil unrest continued during month amid allegations that President Hernández used narco-trafficking proceeds in 2013 presidential campaign. U.S. Federal Court document 2 Aug cited Hernández as part of group of high-level officials who used illicit money to consolidate political power, accusing Hernández of receiving \$1.5mn for campaign financing for 2013 presidential election from individuals involved in drug trafficking; president’s office 3 Aug denied accusations. Allegations spurred public anger; university students 5 Aug used rocks and burning tyres to establish roadblock on Supaya Boulevard in capital Tegucigalpa, demanding Hernández’s resignation and clashing with anti-riot police. Protests grew in Tegucigalpa 6 Aug and 7 Aug spread to other cities. Police officers 6 Aug fired tear gas into bus filled with university students in San Pedro Sula, leaving several injured. In continued electoral reform efforts, Congress 15 Aug approved final bill outlining

process for election of members of newly-created National Electoral Council to oversee electoral cycles and Electoral Justice Tribunal to settle election-related disputes; 22 Aug appointed members of special commission in charge of process. Amid regional focus on migration and after late July U.S.-Guatemala “Safe Third Country” agreement requiring migrants who pass through Guatemala to first seek asylum there instead of U.S., acting U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kevin McAleenan 1 Aug stated U.S. will pursue similar agreement with Honduras. Hernández 26 Aug travelled to Washington to discuss migration issues, among other matters.

↓ **Mexico** Amid incidents of mass violence, record high homicide rate caused alarm, with 2019 on course to surpass 2018 as deadliest year on record. Officials announced Jan-July saw 20,135 murders (95.8 per day), higher than 19,335 for same period last year. Mass killings continued; in Veracruz (east), armed gunmen 28 Aug attacked and set fire to bar in town of Coatzacoalcos, killing 28; state governor Cuitláhuac García said massacre was retaliation after bar refused to let criminal group sell drugs. In Michoacán (centre), armed groups including Jalisco Cartel New Generation (CJNG), Viagras and Knights Templar continued to compete over criminal markets including extortion of avocado industry; CJNG claimed responsibility for nineteen bodies found in Uruapan 8 Aug; in response, govt increased deployment of National Guard, controversial main instrument of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)’s security plan, in region. Violence against women remained a concern following allegations that four policemen 3 Aug raped teenage girl and a policeman sexually assaulted another girl days later, both in Mexico City; Mexico City’s mayor 14 Aug announced six police officers had been suspended as part of investigations; hundreds of protesters 13 and 16 Aug demonstrated against police inaction in tackling violence against women, damaging bus station and police station in latter demonstration. AMLO 19 Aug asked protesters to refrain from violence; said there would be no repression of demonstrations. Targeted killings of journalists continued including 2 Aug killing of Edgar Alberto Nava López in Zihuataneho, Guerrero (south) and Jorge Celestino Ruiz in Actopan, Veracruz (Gulf coast). Govt 4 Aug called for extradition of culprit of 3 Aug attack that left 22 dead, including eight Mexicans in El Paso, Texas; xenophobia against Latinos and Mexicans in particular motivated violent attack according to U.S. police reports.

➔ **Nicaragua** Political situation remained tense amid end of govt-opposition negotiations, while govt continued repressive measures. Following opposition body Civic Alliance’s repeated calls for resumption of talks and President Ortega’s 30 July letter notifying dialogue’s international guarantors of his decision to end negotiations, govt repression remained at high level; opposition Blue and White National Unity 14 Aug stated 134 political prisoners arrested since June still detained and alleged police unlawfully detaining on average four civilians daily. Permanent Human Rights Commission 7 Aug filed complaint to govt over unconstitutionality of Amnesty Law for crimes related to 2018 uprisings. International pressure continued with actors calling on govt to resume dialogue; U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet and Spain’s foreign ministry 2 Aug released statements regretting govt’s decision to end talks. U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton 6 Aug threatened imposition of blockade while U.S. Nicaragua ambassador 14 Aug called on govt to resume talks,

warning of possible Organization of American States measures. Amid economic deterioration, govt delegation 8 Aug began visit to allies including Cuba, Russia and Iran, signing bilateral trade agreement with Iran 13 Aug.

➡ **Venezuela** Political crisis continued as U.S. announced latest round of sanctions and govt suspended dialogue with opposition. U.S. 5 Aug announced new sanctions against govt, freezing all Venezuelan state assets in U.S. and threatening secondary sanctions against those doing business with President Maduro's govt; in response, govt accused U.S. of "economic terrorism" and 7 Aug suspended involvement in Norwegian-mediated talks with opposition in Barbados, though did not break off talks completely; U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton 6 Aug accused Maduro of using negotiations to buy time, saying it was "time for action". UN Human Rights Chief Bachelet 8 Aug expressed concern that "extremely broad" sanctions fail to contain measures to mitigate impact "on most vulnerable sectors of population". Numerous media including Associated Press 18 Aug reported that Diosdado Cabello, head of govt-controlled National Constituent Assembly (ANC) had begun talking with U.S. through intermediary; U.S. President Trump and Maduro 20 Aug both confirmed secret Venezuela-U.S. dialogue underway. Govt continued suppression of opposition; ANC 12 Aug lifted parliamentary immunity from four MPs; ANC also appointed special commission to determine whether to bring forward legislative elections due late 2020.