

Latin America and the Caribbean

Southern Cone

➔ **Brazil Supreme Electoral Court resisted continued military interest in electoral process as public polarisation over armed forces grew.** Ahead of presidential elections set for Oct, concerns grew regarding unlawful intervention of military in electoral process. Superior Electoral Court 2-19 Aug granted military permission to inspect source code for electronic voting machines to be used for elections, following Defence Minister Paulo Sergio Nogueira's request 1 Aug. However, court 8 Aug declined Nogueira's request, made in July, to access 2014 and 2018 election data, arguing military has no mandate to analyse past elections. Court same day announced army's Col Ricardo Sant'anna would be barred from participating in group responsible for overseeing elections, accusing him of "spreading false information in order to discredit the Brazilian electoral system". After confrontation with Rio de Janeiro's mayor, Bolsonaro 10 Aug halted plans to combine traditional Sept 7 Independence Day military parade with electoral rally organised by supporters in Copacabana neighbourhood. Proposed joint event polarised public; notably, social network monitoring initiative Democracia Digital 10 Aug said right-wing Telegram groups and channels in Jan-July 2022 saw 695% increase in messages with content including calls for military intervention and demands to arrest Supreme Court justices compared to same period in 2021. Meanwhile, University of São Paulo Law School 11 Aug presented "Letter to Brazilians in defence of the Democratic Rule of Law" at launch event; letter, published late July, raised concerns about "immense danger to democratic normality" amid "insinuations of contempt for the results of the elections", gathered over 1.1mn signatures.

Andes

➔ **Colombia New govt took steps to revive talks with ELN and other armed and criminal groups; Colombia and Venezuela restored diplomatic relations.** President Petro 7 Aug took office, becoming first left-leaning president in country's recent history. During inauguration speech, Petro promised to complete implementation of 2016 peace agreement with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC); also called on armed and criminal groups to lay down their weapons, referring to govt's "Total Peace" plan aimed at reviving negotiations with National Liberation Army (ELN) and demobilising other armed groups. Following this appeal, Petro 11 Aug sent high-level delegation to Cuba, where ELN negotiating team has remained in exile since talks broke down in 2019. Govt's negotiating commission 12 Aug said it would "recognise the legitimacy of the rebel negotiators" and reinstate protocols signed in 2016, including protections for negotiators and roles for guarantor states Norway and Cuba; commission added that ELN said it will take "necessary steps to restart talks". Petro 19 Aug suspended arrest and extradition warrants of ELN negotiators; defence ministry 25 Aug announced govt will suspend aerial bombing of armed groups; Petro 27 Aug proposed

multilateral ceasefire to armed groups throughout country; interior minister 30 Aug submitted bill to Congress laying out peace initiative to pave way for negotiations with armed groups. In ELN's stronghold Arauca department (north east), group 12 Aug announced release of nine individuals held captive; 18 Aug released six military personnel. Criminal organisation Gulf Clan 7 Aug announced unilateral ceasefire, expressed "goodwill to take part in exploratory talks". Govt 12 Aug announced new military and police leadership, sending around 50 generals into retirement; reaction from military, broadly sceptical of president, was muted. Meanwhile, in Cauca department (south west), unknown assailants 28 Aug killed three members of indigenous community in Caldono municipality; suspected FARC dissidents 31 Aug kidnapped at least five minors, killed another near Argelia town. After incoming administration and Venezuela late-July agreed to reestablish relations, Petro 28 Aug sent new ambassador, Armando Benedetti, to Caracas, reversing outgoing President Duque's confrontational policy toward Venezuela; Venezuelan President Maduro same day sent former FM Félix Plasencia as Venezuela's representative in Bogotá.

↓ **Ecuador Bomb exploded in port city of Guayaquil, killing five and prompting authorities to impose state of emergency; negotiations between govt and Indigenous organisations stalled.** Improvised explosive device 14 Aug detonated in Guayaquil, country's second largest city and major trade hub, killing five and injuring at least 17. Attack, which authorities blamed on "criminal groups", marked dramatic escalation of violence in city that has seen rising gang-related crime in recent months as groups fight for control over drug-trafficking routes. In response to explosion, President Lasso 14 Aug declared state of emergency in Guayaquil, sixth such emergency imposed to curb violence since he took office in May 2021. Interior Minister Patricio Carrillo same day called blast "a declaration of war against the state" by criminal gangs, while city's mayor, Cynthia Viteri, wrote open letter to Lasso saying "criminal groups have become a government within a government in Ecuador". Situation in Guayaquil epitomizes rising violence nationwide. Authorities as of 17 Aug recorded 2,593 homicides throughout Ecuador in 2022 compared to 2,471 in whole of 2021; media outlet Expreso 15 Aug reported that, on average, one person is murdered every two hours in Ecuador. Authorities 16 Aug said govt is developing referendum text with ten questions for public deliberation, focused predominantly on ways to address country's security issues. Meanwhile, negotiations between govt and indigenous groups following violent anti-govt protests in June stalled. Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, which spearheaded protests, 2 Aug presented proposal demanding govt set price controls on 44 essential goods, but little progress was made. Indigenous leaders 13 Aug said govt was not negotiating in good faith and lacked political will to advance negotiations.

➡ **Venezuela Colombia and Venezuela restored diplomatic relations, Mexico dialogue remained on hold, and divisions within opposition over question of primaries to elect candidate for 2024 elections persisted.** After govt and incoming Colombian administration late-July agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations, Colombian President Petro 28 Aug sent new ambassador, Armando Benedetti, to Caracas, reversing outgoing Colombian President Duque's confrontational policy toward Venezuela; President Maduro same day sent former FM Félix Plasencia as Venezuela's representative in Bogotá. Meanwhile, opposition leader Juan Guaidó 12 Aug claimed there had been "informal meetings" between

opposition leadership and Petro's govt, but said he wished Petro had not so quickly recognised Maduro's govt, which he accused of "harbouring terrorism". Amid restoration of relations, govt 4 Aug announced it would seek extradition of leading opposition politician Julio Borges from Colombia, whom Caracas accuses of orchestrating Aug 2018 drone explosion near Maduro during military parade. Court same day sentenced Borges' Primero Justicia party member, Juan Requesens, to eight years in prison for involvement in same drone attack; 16 others received up to 30 years. Govt's chief negotiator Jorge Rodríguez 9 Aug said talks with opposition could not resume until Venezuelan cargo plane, held in Argentina since early-June at Washington's request because of suspected links to Iranian Revolutionary Guard (which remains on U.S.' terrorism blacklist), was returned; meanwhile, opposition's Chief Negotiator Gerardo Blyde 15 Aug said there was "very high probability" that formal Mexico talks between govt and opposition would soon resume. Opposition alliance Unitary Platform remained divided over issue of primaries to select candidate for 2024 presidential election; hardliners, including Leopoldo López of Voluntad Popular, want primaries held in early 2023, while moderates prefer end of next year, and some accuse rivals of being more interested in settling issue of opposition leadership than participating in 2024 elections.

Central America and Mexico

➔ **El Salvador Govt extended state of emergency for fifth time to combat gang violence as more evidence emerged of authorities' abuses.** Press and civil society organisations accused authorities of human rights violations, including arbitrary detentions and torture, during state of emergency imposed late March. Notably, media outlet El Faro 7 Aug published court records of 690 people arrested since March, showing that police had justified arrests of at least 60 with ambiguous criteria such as "looking suspicious" or being "nervous"; Central American University Human Rights Observatory 10 Aug released report documenting 306 cases of torture between 27 March and 7 July; news outlet La Prensa Gráfica 25 Aug reported that, according to sources from Institute of Legal Medicine, 73 people have died in custody since March, at least 35 of them presenting signs of violence. Dozens of people 9, 16, 24 Aug took to streets in capital San Salvador, demanding release of their relatives detained since March. Despite criticism, Legislative Assembly 17 Aug approved fifth extension of state of emergency; govt same day said that 50,000 suspected gang members had been detained since March. Authorities 9 Aug extradited MS-13 members José Jonathan Guevara-Castro, alias "Sospechoso", and Edwin Mauricio Rodríguez Morales, alias "Manicomio", to U.S., 24 Aug reported capture of one MS-13 leader, Byron Arístides Salazar Ramírez, alias "Sleepy". La Prensa Gráfica 9 Aug revealed court had ordered Attorney General's Office to investigate whether 18th Street gang had intervened in favour of President Bukele's Nuevas Ideas candidates in 2021 municipal and legislative elections. In interview with French daily newspaper *Le Monde*, VP Félix Ulloa 12 Aug said that audios, in which govt official Carlos Marroquín admitted to negotiating with gangs, were genuine and suggested authorities open investigation against him. On international front, El Salvador 12 Aug abstained from condemning Nicaraguan President Ortega's crackdown on dissent during Organization of American States (OAS) extraordinary session; OAS approved resolution.

➡ **Honduras** **Amid ongoing efforts to detain and prosecute criminal leaders, authorities eradicated large number of coca bushes, and negotiations to establish UN-backed anti-corruption commission continued at slow pace.** Judicial proceedings continued in U.S. against Honduran nationals extradited on drug-trafficking charges. Herlinda Bobadilla, head of Montes Bobadilla trafficking clan, 2 Aug pleaded not guilty to drug-trafficking charges at first court hearing in Virginia; trial expected to begin in Feb 2023. Former National Police Head Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla 10 Aug appeared before judge for first time, 19 Aug pleaded not guilty to drug-trafficking charges. Meanwhile, authorities 12 Aug extradited suspected MS-13 leader Tokiro Rodas Ramírez to U.S. on organised crime charges, 16 Aug arrested María Mendoza, alias “Marbella”, wanted for extradition by U.S. on human-trafficking charges, in La Esperanza municipality, Intibucá department (west). Authorities continued forced eradication of coca crops to curb activities of criminal groups, who largely control coca production. In Colón department (north east), authorities 1 Aug reported seizure of over 1.6mn coca bushes, largest seizure of its kind in country. In San Pedro Sula city, Cortés department (north west), unknown assailants 13 Aug killed five people, bringing number of massacres this year to 33. Meanwhile, efforts to establish anti-corruption commission continued at slow pace. Notably, govt 22 Aug submitted proposals and comments on memorandum draft that UN had proposed in July, suggesting limits to commission’s ability to serve as joint plaintiff and requesting to choose commissioner. On diplomatic front, Head of Congress Luis Redondo 11 Aug signed technical cooperation agreement with Legislative Assembly of El Salvador during visit to neighbouring country. Honduras next day abstained from Organization of American States (OAS) extraordinary session vote to condemn Nicaraguan President Ortega’s crackdown on dissent; OAS approved resolution.

➡ **Mexico** **Rival criminal groups clashed, deadly attacks on journalists continued, and govt announced plans to extend military’s control over policing.** Deadly violence persisted at high levels during month. In Jalisco and Guanajuato states (both centre), suspected members of Jalisco Cartel New Generation (CJNG) 9 Aug blocked roads and set fire to vehicles and shops, apparently in response to federal forces’ attempt to capture leading members of group. In Ciudad Juárez city, Chihuahua state (north), suspected members of Sinaloa Cartel’s affiliated groups Los Mexicles and Los Chapos 11 Aug clashed inside local prison, killing two. Violence same day spilled onto city streets, with members of Los Mexicles killing nine. In Baja California state (north west), presumed members of local criminal group Los Erres, which collaborates with CJNG, 12 Aug blocked roads and set fire to public transport in Tecate, Mexicali, Rosarito, Ensenada and Tijuana cities. Suspected members of La Familia Michoacana drug cartel 25 Aug clashed with local gang in Tuzantla municipality, Michoacán state (centre), killing eight. Deadly attacks on journalists continued. Unknown assailants 2 Aug shot dead journalist Ernesto Méndez in San Luis de la Paz, Guanajuato; authorities 16 Aug found body of missing journalist Juan Arjón López in San Luis Río Colorado municipality, Sonora state (north west). Human rights organisation Article-19 18 Aug said 2022 “could be the worst year in a century” for Mexico’s journalists, with 331 documented attacks between Jan and June. President López Obrador 8 Aug announced he would present legislation to formally integrate National Guard into Ministry of Defence (SEDENA), prompting criticism from civil society observers for breaking promise to keep National Guard as civilian institution. Defence Minister

Gen Luis Cresencio Sandoval 10 Aug confirmed National Guard will be formally integrated into SEDENA 16 Sept. Meanwhile, authorities 25 Aug announced former Attorney General Jesús Murillo Karam will be criminally prosecuted for disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa college in 2014, becoming highest-ranking official facing justice for their deaths.

➡ **Nicaragua President Ortega's govt tightened grip on Catholic Church amid continued crackdown on civil society; tensions with foreign partners persisted.** Hostilities against religious figures increased, notably targeting parishes and bishops in Matagalpa department (north). Police 2 Aug surrounded Divina Misericordia parish in Sébaco municipality, placing priest and some parishioners under siege until 4 Aug. Police 3 Aug surrounded Matagalpa diocese, blockading Bishop Rolando Álvarez, vocal critic of President Ortega, and some of his associates for two days. Authorities 5 Aug opened investigation against Álvarez for "promoting hate" and placed him under house arrest; 19 Aug forcibly entered Episcopal Palace of Matagalpa diocese, arresting Álvarez and at least seven associates. Authorities 12 Aug banned Our Lady of Fatima procession, organised by Catholic Church to take place 13 August in capital Managua, citing "internal security" concerns. In Mulukukú municipality, North Caribbean Autonomous Region (north east), police 14 Aug arrested Priest Óscar Benavides. Govt continued to shutter civil society organisations and media outlets. Notably, authorities 1-25 Aug shut down television channels RB3 and Nueva Guinea TV and 15 radio stations, including ten belonging to Matagalpa diocese; notably, 25 Aug shut down "Radio Stereo Fe" Catholic radio station, belonging to diocese of Estelí, after that diocese 23 Aug criticised govt for persecution of Church. National Assembly 9-11 Aug revoked legal status of 200 NGOs, 24 Aug revoked 100 more, bringing total number of NGOs closed since 2018 to over 1,450. Organization of American States (OAS) 12 Aug adopted resolution condemning "harassment and arbitrary restrictions placed on religious organizations" and urged govt to "cease harassment and intimidation of the independent press". Meanwhile, Inter-American Court of Human Rights 19 Aug demanded immediate release of Álvarez and others "arbitrarily" detained in Nicaragua; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet same day condemned raid of Episcopal Palace of Matagalpa and "new wave of harassment" against members of Catholic Church; Pope Francis 21 Aug expressed concern over situation and called for dialogue.

Caribbean

➡ **Haiti Civil society platform Montana Accord called off negotiations with PM Ariel Henry while protestors demanded his resignation, and EU called for end to gang violence as clashes reignited.** Political negotiations suffered setback as Monitoring Office of so-called Montana Accord (who have proposed two-year transitional plan that includes five-member presidential college and prime minister) 2 Aug announced end to discussions with interim govt of PM Henry, accusing him of refusing to advance dialogue on rebuilding institutional capacity and organising free and fair elections. Meanwhile, thousands of protestors 22, 29 Aug took to streets across Haiti, demanding Henry's resignation, whom they blame for widespread poverty and violence. Following violent escalation of security crisis in July that left hundreds dead, EU 1 Aug called for immediate end to gang

violence and emergency care for victims. Gang alliances G9 and G-Pep 12 Aug clashed in Cité Soleil district of Port-au-Prince, killing 50. UN office in Haiti 10 Aug condemned prison conditions that have caused 97 deaths since beginning of year, including occupancy at over four times maximum capacity in country's four main prisons; urged authorities to provide prison administration with financial, human and material supplies, and accelerate judicial proceedings. Organization of American States General Secretariat 8 Aug condemned international community for poor management of Haiti's crises, saying "this failure has to do with 20 years of erratic political strategy by an international community that was not capable of facilitating the construction of a single institution with the capacity to address the problems facing Haitians"; called on foreign partners to embrace new approach with financial and technical support to strengthen dialogue process, curb violence and help restore democracy. Over 400 Haitians 6-8 Aug arrived at Florida coast on sailboats; U.S. authorities took majority into custody, 9 Aug repatriated 186. Dominican Republic authorities 9 Aug arrested 492 irregular Haitian migrants and immediately deported them.