

Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** Political tensions continued amid disappearance of ex-Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) commander, while violence between armed groups remained high. After former FARC commander and current Congressman Jesús Santrich went missing 30 June from FARC demobilisation zone on Colombia/Venezuela border, Supreme Court issued arrest warrant for Santrich 9 July, day he was due to attend court on charges of drug smuggling; President Duque 1 July claimed Santrich “wants to evade justice” while FARC 9 July released statement reiterating commitment to peace process. UN Security Council 11-14 July visited Colombia, calling on govt to protect FARC ex-combatants and community activists, move forward on transitional justice and promote rural reform; Duque 12 July asked for extension of UN Mission in Colombia. National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla-related violence continued; ELN 4 July bombed Attorney General’s Office in Ocaña (north east), on 55th anniversary of group’s foundation, and 18 July attacked army base in Samaniego, Nariño (south west) with improvised mortar, causing loss of power. ELN 4 July called on govt to restart negotiations; govt refused and said Venezuelan govt directly protects ELN and FARC dissidents. Dissident-related violence remained high; dissidents 10 July attacked police truck in Caquetá (south), injuring three soldiers. Dissident group Steven González Front 12 July clashed with army in Cumbitara, Nariño, reportedly killing several soldiers. Humanitarian groups early July said ongoing violence between FARC dissidents and ELN confined over 1,000 people in Chocó (west). Attacks on activists continued; unidentified attackers 3 July killed social leader Tatiana Paola Posso Espitia in El Copey, Cesar (north).

➔ **El Salvador** President Bukele continued to detail measures as part of anti-gang “Territorial Control Plan”. Bukele 2 July announced second phase in plan, called “Opportunities” and aimed at preventing gang recruitment, providing vocational training to 100,000 youth. As part of anti-gang plan, Bukele 8 July ordered police and military deployment on transport routes to deter gangs from assaulting passengers and 17 July instructed defence ministry to recruit up to 3,000 new soldiers to implement measures. Amid concerns over extraordinary measures adopted in jails, govt 2 July accepted Inter-American Commission on Human Rights’ request to visit country. Regional focus on migration continued; Bukele 21 July met with U.S. Sec State Pompeo in El Salvador, signing agreement to combat drug trafficking, gangs and illegal migration.

➔ **Guatemala** Fallout from June presidential and legislative elections continued amid uncertainty over future of International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) 1 July confirmed two most successful candidates from presidential vote – Sandra Torres of Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE) and Alejandro Giammattei of political party Vamos – would contest run-off 11 Aug; Congress 11 July confirmed out of 160 seats in congress UNE won 52 and Vamos 17. Amid criticism from public prosecutors that TSE rushed results confirmation and ignored irregularities, TSE 17 July announced official end to voting recount, ruling out allegations of electoral fraud. Ahead of 3 Sept end of CICIG’s mandate, Human Rights Prosecutor Jordán Rodas 15 July asked Constitutional Court to permanently uphold Jan ruling which blocked govt from

terminating CICIG's mandate with immediate effect; report from NGO Amnesty International 9 July warned govt's attacks on CICIG could wipe out progress in strengthening judicial system. Govt and U.S. 26 July signed "Safe Third Country" protocol which requires Central American migrants who pass through Guatemala to first seek asylum there, rather than in U.S.

➡ **Haiti** Govt faced civil unrest and demands for President Moïse to resign. Unrest continued amid anger over corruption allegations linking Moïse to embezzlement of PetroCaribe (alliance giving Caribbean states access to cheap Venezuelan oil) funds; police and demonstrators clashed in capital Port-au-Prince following 6 July funeral of radio journalist killed in June, protesters setting up roadblocks and setting fire to vehicles and police firing tear gas. As opposition senators blocked ratification of PM Lapin and his cabinet, some in opposition proposed election of new PM, while others reaffirmed they will block any ratification process until Moïse resigns; Moïse 22 July named Fritz-William Michel as new PM, third in 2019. Gang-related violence continued; shootout between rival gangs in Port-au-Prince 6-7 July killed two, while 10 July clashes between different factions in capital's La Saline neighbourhood killed at least four people. Police 22 July captured high-profile gang leader Arnel Joseph as he sought medical attention in Les Cayes.

➡ **Honduras** Civil unrest continued while rights groups expressed concerns about new penal code. Students and security forces 15 July clashed at Honduran Technical Institute in capital Tegucigalpa; police deployed to several schools in city where protests disrupted teaching. Congress 11 July announced continuation of consultations over new penal code, due to come into effect in Nov after revisions to previous versions due to criticism over several articles supposedly limiting free speech and offering leniency for corruption and drug trafficking; 30 civil society organisations 17 July called for code to be abandoned and said they would develop alternative. In continued electoral reform efforts, Organization of American States advisers 11 July delivered final recommendations on reform process including on functioning of newly-created National Electoral Council to oversee electoral cycles and Electoral Justice Tribunal to settle election-related disputes; Congressional caucuses 15 July committed to finalising laws on new bodies by mid-Aug.

➡ **Mexico** Amid high levels of violence, govt continued deployment of National Guard (NG), controversial main instrument of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)'s security plan. Rights groups remained concerned NG will further militarise public security with initial 70,000 officers coming from army and navy; members of Federal Police due to join NG protested against alleged labour rights abuses in transitioning to force, with group of officers 3-4 July blocking major road in capital Mexico City. Planned training for NG in human rights, agreed in April with UN human rights office, yet to take place despite deployment of forces; Guerrero and State of Mexico (south) authorities 16 July arrested three soldiers on charges of kidnapping, saying soldiers belonged to NG; AMLO said they had "not yet" been incorporated into force. Record levels of violence continued with authorities reporting 17,065 homicides Jan-June 2019, up from 16,585 same period in 2018. Armed group violence remained high with groups clashing with newly deployed NG units. On day of NG deployment to Tabasco (south), criminal group 1 July set vehicles on fire to block roads; Jalisco Cartel New Generation clashed with NG in shootout on border of Guanajuato and Michoacán states (centre) 8 July, injuring one

member of NG. Amid focus on regional migration, U.S. President Trump announced negotiations on “Safe Third Country” agreement – which would require Central American migrants to seek asylum in Mexico, rather than continuing north to U.S. – would begin 22 July; FM Ebrard said govt will not enter negotiations “without express authorisation of Congress”. Finance Minister Carlos Urzúa 9 July resigned, saying conflicts of interest existed within AMLO administration and accusing senior govt members of nepotism.

➡ **Nicaragua** Govt continued to alternate between adopting conciliatory measures and repressing opposition. Following June amnesty law for crimes related to 2018 uprisings, govt 4 July dismissed cases against 307 political prisoners, though lawyers warned judges could reopen them in future; govt continued to insist all political prisoners were freed despite opposition Civic Alliance’s late-June distribution of list of 91 govt opponents allegedly still jailed. Alliance 5, 11 and 17 July reiterated availability to resume third round of talks with govt, however govt did not reply to offers. Govt crackdown on opposition, including church members, continued. Permanent Commission on Human Rights 15 July said it was receiving multiple reports each day of unlawful detentions; same day, police encircled commission’s headquarters. Police 17 July broke into house of civilian in León during police operation, shooting him dead and wounding two others; police alleged officers fired in self-defence but other accounts disputed this, with NGO Amnesty International and Organization of American States Sec Gen Almagro condemning killing and urging accountability. Bishop Álvarez said civilians 18 July helped thwart group of armed men who attempted to stop and harass convoy he was travelling in, in Terrabona, Matagalpa department. Students 25 July marched in Managua and elsewhere to commemorate National Student Day; police, who had not authorised marches, repressed demonstrations, leaving at least two injured and fourteen temporarily detained. International pressure on govt remained high, though govt allies reiterated support; UN deputy human rights chief 10 July urged govt to engage in dialogue, while U.S. VP Pence 18 July condemned President Ortega for alleged crackdown on dissent and harassment of church. Russian President Putin 19 July reassured Ortega of Russian support in letter on 40th anniversary of Sandinista revolution.

➡ **Venezuela** Govt and opposition dialogue resumed while UN human rights chief released report into human rights violations. Govt and opposition delegations 15 July resumed talks in Barbados; Norwegian govt, mediating negotiations, said intention was for talks to be “continuous and expeditious” with delegations due to meet each week for several days to find solution to crisis. President Maduro 19 July said ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela should prepare for “epic battle” to recover opposition-controlled National Assembly (AN) in as yet unannounced parliamentary elections; opposition leader and “interim President” Juan Guaidó 16 July said “real solution” to crisis was close but three days later said “tough days” lay ahead and there were “no magic solutions”. Amid continued opposition division between those seeking dialogue and hardliners pushing for international military intervention, AN 23 July approved law restoring country’s membership of regional defence Rio Treaty, which some in opposition see as step to requesting foreign military assistance; however, Guaidó insisted treaty was not primarily about military intervention. International support for Norwegian-sponsored talks remained strong with International Contact Group, headed by EU and Uruguay, and UN Sec Gen

Guterres reiterating support for talks; U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela Elliot Abrams 12 July expressed hope negotiations would remain confidential so as to be constructive. Contact Group's Special Representative Enrique Iglesias 9 July held talks in Caracas with both Maduro and Guaidó. UN Human Rights Chief Bachelet 5 July presented report accusing govt of committing "numerous human rights violations" including torture and extrajudicial killings; govt filed over 70 objections to report and said report failed to take into account evidence govt presented. Report called for dissolution of police special forces (FAES) but Maduro 19 July expressed support for FAES. Repression of opposition continued; govt 12 July arrested two of Guaidó's bodyguards, accusing them of trafficking military weapons. U.S. 21 July said Venezuelan air force "aggressively shadowed" U.S. reconnaissance aircraft in international airspace 19 July, govt claimed plane entered its airspace. Mass power-cut hit most of country 22 July; govt blamed U.S. "electromagnetic attack".