

Latin America and the Caribbean

➔ **Colombia** Violence between armed groups remained high, while political tensions continued over role of transitional justice mechanism of 2016 peace deal with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Ex-FARC commander Jesús Santrich, released from prison in May after Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP, created under peace deal to handle cases deriving from govt-FARC conflict) ruled against his extradition to U.S. on drug trafficking charges, took seat in Congress 11 June as part of peace deal; other legislators protested his swearing in, claiming incident undermined legitimacy of peace agreement. Despite previous objections, President Duque 6 June signed statutory law regarding functioning of SJP. Violence between armed forces and FARC dissident groups continued; military operation killed seven fighters from Seventh front dissident group in Meta (centre) 1 June, while one soldier died in clash with dissident group in Cauca (south west) 10 June. FARC dissident groups revealed proof of life videos for two people previously abducted: 9 June for soldier taken 5 March in Arauca (east) and 15 June for civilian kidnapped 10 June in Cauca. Dissidents 3 June attacked National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group unit, prompting displacement of over 400 people, in Litoral San Juan in Chocó (west); army 16 June killed regional ELN commander in Cauca. In north west, conflict between Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC, country's main drug trafficking group) and AGC splinter group "Caparrapos" continued; gunmen killed four members of same family in Antioquia 4 June, with local media reporting killing was part of AGC-"Caparrapos" conflict. Attacks on activists increased including unknown assailants killing social leader María del Pilar Hurtado in Tierralta, Córdoba (northwest) 21 June.

➔ **El Salvador** New President Nayib Bukele, sworn in 1 June, launched flurry of anti-gang measures. Bukele early June named cabinet including two hardliners in fight against armed groups, René Merino Monroy as minister of defence and Mauricio Arriaza Chicas as director of national police. Human Rights Institute of Central American University decried Arriaza appointment, said he previously led police units accused of extrajudicial killings. Bukele 11 June ruled out possibility of truce with gangs while Arriaza next day said police would adopt harsher measures. Bukele's "Territorial Control Plan" began 20 June with three focus areas: tightening control of jailed gang leaders; curbing financing for illicit activities; and strengthening capacity of security forces. Gang attacks on security forces continued with four police officers killed 1-17 June, and a soldier 26 June. Amid regional focus on migration and govt criticism that U.S.-Mexico 7 June deal to increase anti-migration efforts did not include Northern Triangle countries, Bukele 20 June met Mexican President López Obrador in Tapachula, Mexico, to discuss migration, with latter pledging \$30mn in support for El Salvador.

➔ **Guatemala** Presidential and legislative elections held mid-June marred by fraud allegations amid reports of death threats on electoral officials prior to elections. In first round of presidential vote 16 June, Sandra Torres, candidate for Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE), won 25.54% of vote, Alejandro Giammattei of Vamos party won 13.95%; both set for second round run-off 11 August. Organization of American States initial assessment of election 18 June found no evidence of fraud but highlighted pre-election violence. However, Supreme Electoral

Tribunal (TSE) 20 June announced recount following fraud allegations. Recount began 26 June but suspended same day after Public Prosecutor raided TSE offices as part of investigation into possible irregularities in results. Recount restarted 27 June. In lead up to election TSE had identified 91 municipalities posing high risk of political violence; attorney general 12 June confirmed electoral crimes prosecutor fled country after receiving death threats. On election day, TSE reported incidents in at least four departments including suspension of voting in San Jorge, Zacapa, department after electoral authorities received death threats. Regional focus on migration continued; govt 13 June began talks in Guatemala City with U.S. officials, reportedly on designating Guatemala “safe third country”, which would require Central American migrants to seek asylum in Guatemala, rather than continuing north to U.S. Despite U.S. claims agreement was close, govt 26 June said such agreement was not under discussion.

↓ **Haiti** Violent anti-govt protests gripped country, while tensions increased over political impasse and alleged corruption. Protesters 9 June demonstrated in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere, demanding President Moïse’s resignation and clashing with police; two people shot dead and further four injured with responsibility for deaths unclear. Demonstrators 10 June began two-day strike in Port-au-Prince and established roadblocks throughout capital; same day, unknown gunmen killed prominent radio journalist who had reported on corruption allegations against Moïse. Protests followed late-May High Court of Auditors final report on PetroCaribe (alliance giving Caribbean states access to cheap Venezuelan oil) scandal, that said Moïse was centre of mass embezzlement scheme of public money; Moïse 12 June denied wrongdoing and refused to leave office, sparking further mass protests 12, 14 and 16 June. Opposition senators continued to block ratification of new PM Lapin’s cabinet for including eight members from heavily-criticised previous cabinet. UN Security Council 24 June approved creation of UN “Integrated Office” supporting political stability and governance to replace UN police force when latter’s mandate ends Oct.

↓ **Honduras** Political tensions worsened as protests against govt’s planned reforms continued, while clashes between anti-govt demonstrators and police led to nationwide deployment of army. Despite President Hernández 2 June revoking planned reforms to health and education systems that could potentially lead to privatisation and mass dismissals, political tensions remained high and protesters demanded Hernández’s resignation; Hernández 10 June said govt would not tolerate protesters’ vandalism while defence secretary reaffirmed army’s willingness to support police in maintaining order. Truck and taxi drivers 17 June and members of police special forces unit 18 June began strikes for better pay and conditions but called them off 20 June after reaching agreements with government. Widespread anti-govt demonstrations continued, including severe unrest in Tegucigalpa 19 June in which police accused of killing two people. Hernández 20 June announced indefinite deployment of army nationwide to maintain order. Same day, military police reportedly shot dead 17-year-old protester in La Paz department. In Tegucigalpa, students and security forces 24 June clashed, with media reporting that after military police fired tear gas on protesters, who responded by throwing stones, police opened fire and wounded at least five students; military policeman also injured in clash 26 June.

➡ **Mexico** High levels of violence continued amid competition between armed groups, while govt reached preliminary agreement with U.S. to increase anti-migration efforts. In Guanajuato state (centre) armed groups continued to compete over oil siphoning, leading to 23 murders 7-9 June. Heavy fighting also ongoing in Michoacán state (centre), with some twenty groups competing over criminal markets; convoy of two dozen vehicles supposedly belonging to Jalisco Cartel New Generation attacked police in Zamora, Michoacán late May, killing three and wounding ten. Targeted killings of journalists continued including journalist Norma Sarabia, shot dead in Huimanguillo, Tabasco (south) 11 June, seventh journalist killed in 2019; Sarabia had reportedly received threats for investigating police corruption. Govt and U.S. 7 June announced preliminary agreement on increasing anti-migration efforts: govt will deploy 6,000 National Guard, controversial main instrument of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's security plan, troops to Guatemala-Mexico border and agreed asylum seekers will remain in Mexico as claims are processed, while U.S. refrains from retaliatory economic measures; agreement to be reviewed within 45 days; rights groups criticised deal's militarisation of border. Federal police 15 June pursued and shot vehicle refusing migration officials' orders to stop in Veracruz state (Gulf coast); govt reported one woman killed and two men from El Salvador wounded.

➡ **Nicaragua** Political tensions continued as govt alternated between adopting conciliatory measures and repressing opposition. Govt 8 June passed amnesty law for political and other crimes related to 2018 uprisings; opposition criticised law for reportedly ensuring immunity for police and para-police units accused of rights abuses. Govt continued to release political prisoners with 106 freed 11-12 June, including main protest leaders. Deadline for release of all political prisoners, agreed in March between govt and opposition, passed 18 June; opposition Civic Alliance insisted over 80 still jailed but govt declared it had fully complied and did not have to release more prisoners; opposition 18-19 June staged minor protests in Managua and promised further protests. Govt continued repression of opposition, including harassment of released prisoners, such as activist Irlanda Jerez, leading some to flee country. Pro-govt groups and police attacked groups celebrating political prisoners' release in León 15 June and Managua 16 June; media reported some of those celebrating injured and others detained. International pressure on govt continued; U.S. State Department 12 June reiterated call for investigation into 2018 unrest, objecting to amnesty law. Organization of American States General Assembly 26-28 June passed resolution creating commission to conduct high-level diplomacy to seek solution to crisis and to produce report on state of Nicaraguan democracy. Amid continuing economic deterioration, U.S. and Canada 21 June announced new sanctions against several officials including Gustavo Porras, National Assembly head.

➡ **Venezuela** Political crisis continued amid international efforts to foster govt-opposition dialogue, while opposition remained divided over whether to negotiate with govt and over allegations of corruption. Opposition split between those seeking dialogue and hardliners pushing for opposition leader and "interim President" Juan Guaidó to request international military intervention. Early June allegations that two of Guaidó's representatives in Colombia embezzled money assigned to cover cost of Venezuelan military deserters heightened tensions within opposition; anti-dialogue faction, backed by Organization of American States Sec Gen Almagro,

demanded full investigation, while Guaidó's chief representative to Colombia, Humberto Calderón, said investigation began two months ago and neared completion. Russian military plane reportedly landed 24 June; Russian embassy 26 June announced its military specialists were leaving country. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bachelet 19-21 June visited Venezuela, meeting with govt, opposition and victims of human rights abuses; visit followed lengthy UN negotiations with govt over visit, as well as govt's release of some political prisoners and consent to possible establishment of a permanent UN human rights office in Caracas. Human rights group Penal Forum and relatives of detainees reported govt 21-23 June detained six members of military and police, including an Air Force general; navy captain Rafael Acosta, one of six arrested, who according to Lima Group showed "visible signs of torture" when brought to military tribunal 28 June, died in custody 29 June, sparking opposition and international outcry. International efforts to find negotiated end to crisis continued; Norwegian govt continued push for resumption of May talks between govt and opposition representatives in Oslo; Sweden hosted preliminary meeting of relevant external actors including Russia, Cuba, Vatican and UN 13 June. Amid continued economic deterioration, UN High Commission for Refugees 7 June released updated figures showing 4mn had fled country. Mass migration continued to cause regional strain; Peru 14 June introduced new immigration rules requiring Venezuelans to obtain visa before arriving at border, leading to large increase in numbers arriving in days before deadline, including 6,000 crossing from Ecuador 13 June.