

Latin America and the Caribbean

Andes

➔ **Colombia Bomb attack at military base injured dozens and helicopter carrying President Duque struck by bullets; National Strike Committee suspended weekly protests.** Car bomb 15 June exploded inside military base in Cúcuta city, Norte de Santander department (north east near Venezuelan border), wounding 36 soldiers; Defence Minister Diego Molano Aponte same day blamed National Liberation Army (ELN) or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident factions for attack; ELN next day denied involvement. Unidentified assailants 25 June shot at helicopter transporting Duque and other govt officials to Cúcuta; no casualties reported. Suspected armed groups 27 June killed nine including four police officers in spate of attacks across country. Meanwhile, thousands 2 June marched in capital Bogotá and other cities, renewing calls for reform in security, health and education sectors. Majority of rural protesters and some urban demonstrators early June complied with National Strike Committee's decision to start lifting or loosening blockades in good-will gesture amid stalled talks with govt; blockades however remained in Valle de Cauca department and its capital Cali, in west along Pacific coast. National Strike Committee 6 June pulled out of negotiations with govt, accusing it of delaying talks, while President Duque same day announced plan to reform police, largely made up of institutional changes already under way; Committee 15 June suspended weekly demonstrations, announced it would turn focus on convening local public assemblies and building political consensus, and convened next protest for 20 July. Govt 18 June amended decree on right to peaceful protest to exclude roadblocks, said use of force to remove them legitimate. During Inter-American Commission on Human Rights visit 8-10 June to assess human rights situation in context of protests, local NGOs Temblores and Indepaz reported 69 people killed during protests, including 41 by police; govt confirmed total of 19 deaths, with only four resulting from police brutality. Colombia 21 June reached 100,000 COVID-19 deaths amid peak in cases and warnings of risk of medical supply shortages.

↓ **Peru Tight presidential runoff vote fuelled electoral crisis as right-wing supporters rejected results, alleging fraud, and some called for military to step in.** Following 6 June presidential polls, right-wing Popular Force presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori next day alleged wide-scale fraud and irregularities; 9 June demanded electoral authorities nullify 200,000 votes. Organization of American States 11 June said its electoral observation mission had "not detected serious irregularities". Fujimori supporters 12 and 15 June protested in capital Lima calling for annulment of contested ballots. National Office of Electoral Processes 15 June declared vote count complete, said left-wing Free Peru party candidate and political newcomer Pedro Castillo had won 50.12% of votes – about 44,000 more than Fujimori; Castillo same day claimed victory. Hundreds of retired officers mid-June sent letter to leaders of armed forces demanding they do not accept Castillo as new president and supporting Fujimori's claims of fraud; President Sagasti next day condemned letter, said it was being investigated by Attorney General's Office. Supporters of both candidates 19 and 26 June protested

in Lima, with Fujimori's followers denouncing fraud and Castillo's supporters calling on electoral authorities to confirm his election. One of four magistrates in National Jury of Elections (JNE), responsible for resolving all legal challenges and officially declaring winner of presidential vote, 23 June quit amid disagreements with other JNE officials over requests to nullify votes; replacement sworn in 26 June.

➡ **Venezuela Mainstream opposition participation in upcoming elections increasingly likely; situation at Colombian border remained tense.** Main opposition parties, including mainstream opposition leader Juan Guaidó's Voluntad Popular (VP), reportedly assessing fielding some candidates in regional and local elections scheduled for Nov. VP delegation 21-25 June met with U.S. officials in U.S. capital Washington D.C. to discuss Guaidó's efforts to establish dialogue with President Maduro; also visited Brussels and Paris 28-29 June. U.S., EU and Canada 25 June jointly said they would review sanctions policies if govt and opposition able to make "meaningful progress" toward transparent elections. Govt 28 June said they would no longer appoint so-called "protectors", ruling-party supporters who de facto exercise same functions as elected official in opposition-led states. National Electoral Council 29 June said it would allow opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable – which had secured majority in National Assembly in 2015 – to run in next elections. Spanish newspaper *El País* and Venezuelan website Armando.info 13 June alleged vast international network had allowed Venezuela to escape U.S. oil sanctions. Second international donors' conference for Venezuela 17 June raised over \$1.5mn in grants and loans to help Venezuelan refugees and migrants; donation pledges up by 45% compared to last year. UN High Commissioner for Refugees 19 June said Venezuela is world's second country most affected by forced displacement with over 5mn displaced. Displaced civilians reportedly started to return home in Apure state at border with Colombia, where armed forces have been fighting against dissident faction of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) known as 10th Front since March. Defence Minister Gen Padrino López 1 June said eight Venezuelan soldiers who had been abducted in April by 10th Front in Apure had been rescued; independent sources however attributed their return to negotiation. NGO Fundaredes 21 June and others in following days said FARC dissidents 15 June killed six indigenous civilians in Apure. Amid slow and erratic COVID-19 vaccination program, govt 10 June blamed U.S. "blockade" for \$10mn shortfall in Venezuela's payments to World Health Organization's COVAX vaccine-sharing program; U.S. Treasury 17 June issued new guidance to ease COVID-19-related transactions despite sanctions.

Southern Cone and Brazil

➡ **Brazil Tensions ran high over management of COVID-19 pandemic as country surpassed 500,000 deaths.** President Bolsonaro 9 June said COVID-19 vaccines "are still in an experimental phase", 17 June alleged infection produces stronger immunity than vaccination, and 24 June questioned efficacy of Brazil's most common vaccine Coronavac. Thousands 19 June protested in all 26 states and capital Brasilia against Bolsonaro's COVID-19 policies, as country same day reached half a million deaths. Health ministry's employee Luís Ricardo

Fernandes 25 June testified before Senate parliamentary commission investigating govt's handling of COVID-19 pandemic, denounced irregularities in purchase of Indian vaccine Covaxin. Commission's head Senator Omar Aziz late June reported mounting evidence that govt had committed "crimes against life". Several opposition parties 30 June submitted "super impeachment request" against Bolsonaro to parliament's lower house, accusing him of committing over 20 crimes in COVID-19 management; protests same day erupted in several cities including Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Recife and Sao Paulo. Opposition senator 28 June filed formal criminal complaint at Supreme Court against Bolsonaro for alleged irregularities in Covaxin deal. Superior Military Court's President 17 June warned opposition's attacks against president could result in "actions outside the Constitution", paving way for military courts to try civilians.

Central America and Mexico

➡ **El Salvador Govt shut down anti-corruption body, fuelling further tensions with international partners.** Govt 4 June pulled out of 2019 anti-corruption agreement with Organization of American States (OAS) that created International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES); govt said move resulted from OAS hiring as adviser former mayor of country's capital San Salvador, Ernesto Muyschondt, currently investigated for paying gangs in exchange for votes in 2014 presidential election. Police same day detained Muyschondt, and attorney general 24 June charged him and five others with "illicit association" and "electoral fraud". U.S. Special Envoy for Northern Triangle Ricardo Zúñiga 4 June "regretted" govt's decision to shut down CICIES, while OAS Sec-Gen Luis Almagro 7 June accused President Bukele of having used CICIES as tool "to investigate actions of opposition politicians". In world premiere, Legislative Assembly 8 June approved Bukele's proposal to make cryptocurrency Bitcoin legal tender. International Monetary Fund 10 June said move raised "macroeconomic, financial and legal issues"; Central American Bank for Economic Integration 14 June said it will provide technical assistance to govt for Bitcoin implementation; World Bank 16 June denied support to govt citing "environmental and transparency shortcomings" of bitcoin. U.S. development agency Administrator Samantha Power 14 June visited country, reiterated "U.S. concerns on democratic governance", but announced \$115mn in aid to address root causes of migration.

➡ **Honduras Deadly brawl opposed members of two rival gangs in country's most notorious prison.** Brawl between members of 18th Street gang and rival MS-13 gang 17 June broke out at La Tolva high-security prison east of capital Tegucigalpa, leaving at least five inmates killed and 39 people injured, including prison guards; prisons have been under military control since late 2019. Unidentified gunmen 7 June killed member of Garifuna indigenous community in Comayagua city (centre), bringing to six number of Garifuna people killed in 2021. Govt continued to face accusations of mismanagement of COVID-19 pandemic. National Anticorruption Council (CNA) 14 June said only two of seven mobile hospitals purchased in 2020 to treat COVID-19 patients have become operational, denounced "paved roads for the corrupt"; CNA has submitted to prosecutors 14 reports on irregularities in mobile hospitals' purchase since 2020. Police 18 June fired tear gas to disperse peaceful protesters demanding reconstruction of levees

washed away by hurricanes in 2020 in San Pedro Sula city's neighbourhood Chamelecón (north). Some 32 civil society groups 16 June formed national movement against tax-free Special Zones of Economic Development (ZEDEs), arguing they do not produce employment and could lead to displacement of vulnerable populations; 22 June organised small protest against ZEDEs in Tegucigalpa. U.S. development agency Administrator Samantha Power 13 June visited Honduras, announced nearly \$24mn in aid to address root causes of migration.

➔ **Mexico** **Legislative elections marked setback for ruling party amid ongoing violence by criminal groups.** Ruling MORENA party 6 June lost absolute majority in lower house of Congress; together with allied Ecologist Green Party and Labour Party, MORENA still holds more than 50% of seats. President López Obrador 8 June said he would negotiate with Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to secure constitutional changes in electoral law, energy sector and security, which require two-thirds majority; 16 June said he would seek constitutional reform to formally incorporate National Guard into armed forces before 2023. MORENA also secured majority of municipalities, and won 11 out of 15 governorships, thus becoming country's primary political force at state level. Violent incidents continued in lead-up to elections, including ambush that killed five people transporting voting materials in Chiapas state (south) 5 June. Consultancy firm Etelekt 21 June reported total of 102 politicians, including 36 candidates, killed since Sept 2020. In days following vote, demonstrators contested results on grounds of alleged electoral fraud and vote-buying notably in Tlaxcala state (centre), where MORENA won most mayorships previously held by PRI. Meanwhile, federal judge 15 June sentenced former mayor of Chínipas city (Chihuahua state in north), Schultz Alcaraz, to eight years in prison after Alcaraz admitted to having abetted assassination of journalist Miroslava Breach in 2017. In Tamaulipas state (north), unidentified gunmen 19 June killed at least 18 people among whom four drug lords in Reynosa city near U.S. border. In Zacatecas state (north), suspected shootout between two rival drug cartels 24-25 June killed 18. U.S. VP Kamala Harris 6-8 June visited Guatemala and Mexico on her first trip abroad since taking office, met with López Obrador in capital Mexico City; both sides agreed to continue to jointly address root causes of migration from Central America. Harris 25 June visited U.S.-Mexico border.

↓ **Nicaragua** **Govt launched unprecedented wave of arrests of political and business representatives ahead of Nov general elections.** Authorities 1-2 June charged prominent opposition presidential hopeful Cristiana Chamorro with "money laundering" and "ideological falseness" and placed her under house arrest. In following days, police launched wave of arrests of opposition politicians, businessmen and journalists under controversial "Treason Law" passed in Dec 2020; at least 20, including four other presidential hopefuls, detained by month's end. As of 25 June, three journalists (including head of independent news outlet Confidencial and Cristiana Chamorro's brother, Carlos Fernando Chamorro) and a former ruling-party official now in opposition had fled into exile. Spate of arrests sparked international outcry. U.S. Treasury 9 June sanctioned four more public officials for "supporting [President] Ortega's efforts to undermine democracy, human rights, and the economy". EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell 10 June firmly condemned spate of detentions, and Organization of American

States' Permanent Council 15 June approved widely-backed resolution condemning arrests and calling for "immediate release of all political prisoners". U.S. Senate Foreign Affairs Committee 22 June approved "Renacer Act", calling for greater international pressure to ensure fair elections in Nicaragua.

Caribbean

➡ **Haiti Authorities postponed controversial constitutional referendum, while gang violence displaced thousands in capital Port-au-Prince.** Authorities 7 June postponed 27 June constitutional referendum, citing logistical impediment due to COVID-19 pandemic; move came after several international partners in recent weeks withdrew support for controversial vote. President Moïse 16 June issued decree giving Independent Advisory Committee 45 extra days to finalise new draft of constitution, and authorities late June scheduled referendum, presidential and legislative elections for 26 Sept. Organization of American States (OAS) mission 8 June arrived in Haiti for three-day visit to facilitate political dialogue with view to holding free and fair elections; mission officials same day met with Moïse and in following days with more than 50 politicians and civil society representatives; opposition party Democratic and Popular Sector declined to speak to mission, denouncing OAS for allegedly "supporting" Moïse. Meanwhile, members of G9 gang alliance 3-6 June raided several police stations in search of weapons in southern neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, killing several police officers. UN humanitarian office 22 June reported 13,600 displaced since 1 June due to increasing levels of violence in several Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods. At border with Dominican Republic, Haitian police officer 7 June shot one civilian dead and wounded another while attempting to stop them from entering Dominican territory. Meanwhile, Haiti as of 8 June had yet to receive COVID-19 vaccines amid surge in cases. Three Port-au-Prince hospitals 2 June announced COVID-19 wards are full; fourth hospital 16 June followed suit.