

Latin America and the Caribbean

Andes

➔ **Colombia** **Armed groups' attempts to consolidate territorial control took heavy toll on civilians, notably along Pacific coast and border with Venezuela.** In Norte de Santander (north east) and Antioquia (north west) departments, spate of attacks 3 Nov killed seven people, including two prominent human rights activists; unidentified armed assailants night of 21-22 Nov killed ten coffee pickers in Betania municipality, Antioquia. In Cauca department (south west), fighting between National Liberation Army (ELN) guerillas and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident group Frente Carlos Patiño early Nov confined around 300 people in López de Micay municipality; unidentified armed group night of 21-22 Nov killed at least five civilians in Argelia municipality. In Chocó department (west), fighting between army and ELN early to mid-Nov displaced over 250 families and confined 1,400 people in Docordó municipality. Army 16 Nov claimed to have killed Emiliano Alcides Osorio Macea, leader of Caparros, splinter group of Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC, one of country's main drug trafficking groups), in Tarazá municipality, Antioquia. Meanwhile, several hundred former FARC combatants and their supporters 1 Nov took to streets in capital Bogotá, after converging from various regions, to call for govt protection from targeted killings. In letter to former President Santos, former FARC commander Rodrigo Londoño 2 Nov said FARC was responsible for several assassination attempts on former VP Germán Vargas Lleras. Thousands 19 Nov gathered in countries' main cities, including Bogotá and second-largest city Medellín, to protest against govt's social and economic policies and demand improved health care and education.

⚡ **Peru** **President's impeachment sparked deadly protest, largest in decades.** Congress 9 Nov voted to remove President Martín Vizcarra from office following allegations of corruption during his time as governor of Moquegua region (2011-2014); next day swore in Congress head Manuel Merino as interim president amid protests, as thousands took to streets in capital Lima, disputing legality of procedure and claiming Vizcarra's impeachment was manoeuvre by MPs who could be affected by his anti-corruption reforms; riot police used tear gas to keep protesters away from Congress building. In following days, protests spread to other cities, notably Trujillo and Cusco. Thousands 14 Nov gathered again in Lima in largest demonstration in decades; clashes between police and protesters left two protesters dead and dozens injured. Merino resigned 15 Nov. Congress next day elected centrist congressman Francisco Sagasti as new interim president. Sagasti 23 Nov announced creation of commission to reform police, named new police chief and removed 18 senior police officers suspected of using excessive force in recent protests.

➔ **Venezuela** **Govt pressed ahead with preparations for 6 Dec legislative elections amid opposition's boycott calls.** Campaign for legislative elections started 3 Nov with little popular interest as non-participation of opposition parties grossly limited political options, guaranteeing govt candidates would prevail. Opposition leader Juan Guaidó's team 13 Nov said "popular consultation" on rejection of 6 Dec vote as sham and approval of opposition's

strategy of “national and international pressure” on President Maduro would take place virtually 7-12 Dec and in person 12 Dec. Following U.S. presidential election 3 Nov, both Maduro and Guaidó 7 Nov congratulated President-elect Joe Biden; Maduro expressed hope of resuming dialogue with U.S., while Guaidó called on Biden to help restore “democracy and freedom” in Venezuela. Biden, who will take office in Jan, vowed during campaign to set aside incumbent President Trump’s hardline approach of isolating Maduro and allies, including implicit threat of possible military intervention, known as “maximum pressure” policy. Court 26 Nov sentenced six Venezuelans working for U.S. oil company CITGO – who have been imprisoned in Venezuela for three years – to between ten and 13-year prison terms on charges of corruption; U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo next day criticised move and called for immediate release of jailed individuals. International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda 4 Nov said there was “a reasonable basis” to believe crimes falling under court’s jurisdiction had been committed in Venezuela since 2017 anti-govt protests, requested information on legal proceedings undertaken in Venezuela against alleged perpetrators. Amid COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturn, social unrest persisted over access to basic commodities, notably gas, electricity and drinking water. Hundreds of teachers and health workers 4 Nov protested in capital Caracas to demand better wages and working conditions.

Central America and Mexico

➔ **El Salvador Tensions between President Bukele’s govt on one hand and Legislative Assembly and judiciary on the other persisted, particularly regarding overall COVID-19 response.** Bukele 12 Nov vetoed law regulating COVID-19 response, which Legislative Assembly passed in Oct, but assembly same day ratified law regardless; law must be approved by Supreme Court to enter into force. Meanwhile, tensions between executive and judiciary persisted. As part of Attorney General’s Office and International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador’s joint investigation into suspected irregularities in purchase of COVID-19-related supplies, prosecutors 9-10 Nov raided 20 govt offices; police temporarily blocked prosecutors from entering health ministry headquarters. Chair of U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Eliot Engel next day called on Salvadoran police not to interfere with investigations. Attorney General’s Office 10 Nov requested that Legislative Assembly lift immunity of national police chief over alleged breach of duties for failing to force finance minister to appear before Legislative Assembly 2 Oct, after several no-shows. Bukele supporters 30 Nov surrounded for several hours headquarters of Supreme Electoral Tribunal in capital San Salvador to press tribunal to accept ruling party officials’ candidacies for mayoral and legislative elections scheduled for Feb 2021 after it suspended their registration based on Constitutional Court’s ruling. Justice efforts related to 1979-1992 civil war continued to falter: judge investigating 1981 El Mozote massacre, in which army is accused of killing around 1,000 civilians, 9 Nov requested that Attorney General investigate whether Bukele and Defence Minister René Merino Monroy had issued orders to block judicial inspection of military archives; move follows judge being repeatedly prevented by army from examining military archives in recent weeks. Govt 23-27 Nov arrested 572 members of MS-13 and 18th Street gangs throughout country in U.S.-backed anti-organised crime operations.

↓ **Guatemala State budget for 2021 sparked unrest; hurricane killed dozens.** Congress 18 Nov approved controversial 2021 budget, including substantial reduction in funding of Human Rights Ombudsman and judiciary, as well as several social and health programs. Thousands 21 Nov demonstrated against budget in capital Guatemala City and other cities, with small group of protesters breaking into Congress and setting fire to parts of building; police fired tear gas to disperse protesters, injuring 22 and detaining 37. Protests continued in following days in Guatemala City, prompting Congress speaker to withdraw bill 25 Nov. President Giammattei 22 Nov dismissed protests as coup attempt by minority groups, and govt same day requested Organization of American States (OAS) to help facilitate dialogue between political forces; OAS sent delegation 27 Nov. Some 2,000 people 28 Nov attended further protests in Guatemala City, demanding Giammattei and Congress representatives who approved budget resign. Govt 23-27 Nov arrested 40 members of MS-13 and 18th Street gangs in U.S.-backed anti-organised crime operations throughout country. After hurricane Eta made landfall 3 Nov, and storm Iota caused flooding mid-month, govt's disaster agency 17-19 Nov reported total of 57 dead, 96 missing and 1.3mn affected.

➔ **Honduras Response to hurricanes consumed govt and political tensions persisted ahead of 2021 general elections.** Hurricanes Eta and Iota made landfall 4 and 16 Nov respectively, causing widespread destruction. Govt's disaster agency 16 and 22 Nov reported 92 dead and more than 4mn affected in total. Local NGO FOSDEH 19 Nov said economic losses amount to \$10bn. Govt 9 Nov created secretariat of transparency, tasked with preventing mismanagement of disaster relief funding; civil society groups and National Anticorruption Council 10 Nov called move unconstitutional and argued it undermines existing anti-corruption institutions. Prosecutor's office 10 Nov opened investigation into alleged overvaluation of aid kits for hurricane victims. Political violence and tensions continued. Ahead of general elections planned for 2021, unidentified gunmen 6 Nov killed mayoral candidate affiliated with ruling National Party, Terry Geston Martínez, in Puerto Lempira, Gracias a Dios department (east). Political disagreements continued to slow down approval of new electoral law, with 200 of 333 articles approved by Congress as of 25 Nov; second presidential term and creation of second round in presidential election among main sticking points. Govt 23-27 Nov arrested 75 members of MS-13 and 18th Street gangs and five police officers across country in U.S.-backed anti-organised crime operations.

➔ **Mexico Criminal violence remained high while previous administrations faced new accusations of corruption and criminal activity.** Armed group violence continued unabated, notably in Guanajuato state (centre), where Santa Rosa de Lima Cartel (SRLC) and Jalisco Cartel New Generation (CJNG) compete for territory and oil siphoning; scores of bodies were discovered in clandestine burial sites, including 76 in Salvatierra city 20 Oct-11 Nov and 45 in Cortázar municipality 1 Nov. Unidentified gunmen killed journalists Jesús Alfonso Piñuelas in Cajeme municipality, Sonora state (north) 2 Nov and Israel Vázquez in Salamanca city, Guanajuato 9 Nov. Hundreds 9 Nov demonstrated against femicides and gender-based violence in Cancún city, Quintana Roo state (south east), after dismembered body of 20-year-old member of feminist movement was found in city previous day; police reportedly fired live rounds at protesters attempting to force entry into city hall, wounding at least two; use of force triggered

further demonstrations in capital Mexico City and Chiapas state in following days. Previous administrations continued to face accusations of corruption and criminal activities. Army captain 11 Nov handed himself over to authorities after judge ordered his detention for alleged links with criminal organisation Guerreros Unidos, suspected of involvement in 2014 disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa teaching college students. *Reforma* newspaper 12 Nov published internal document from Attorney General's Office which accused former President Peña Nieto of having run criminal structure to influence elections and accepted bribes during his time in office. Mexican and U.S. Attorney Generals 17 Nov jointly announced that U.S. would drop drug trafficking charges against former Defence Minister General Salvador Cienfuegos so he could be investigated in Mexico instead; Mexico govt had raised objections over his arrest in U.S. in Oct, citing national security considerations; Cienfuegos returned to Mexico next day. Govt 27 Nov issued arrest warrant for corruption and began to seek extradition of former Public Security Minister Genaro García Luna, currently awaiting trial in U.S. on charges of collaborating with Sinaloa Cartel.

➔ **Nicaragua Authorities continued to pass repressive laws and harass opposition.** Following Oct “foreign agents” and “cybercrime” bills, govt-controlled National Assembly 10 Nov approved constitutional amendment to allow life sentences for hate crimes; human rights group Nunca Más immediately denounced move designed to “persecute opponents”. Govt crackdown on opposition continued. Police 1 Nov raided opposition platform National Coalition (NC) meeting in Matagalpa city (centre) and 8 Nov reportedly prevented several NC leaders from leaving their homes to attend commemorations for killed protesters and political prisoners in various cities including Jinotepe, Carazo department (centre). U.S. 9 Nov sanctioned former President Arnoldo Alemán (1997-2002) for corruption, including “misappropriating millions of dollars of public funds for the benefit of himself and members of his family” during his time in office, barring him and his family from entering U.S.. Hurricanes Eta and Iota, latter being most powerful ever recorded in country, made landfall 3 and 16 Nov respectively; VP Murillo 17 Nov said over 48,000 had been displaced, next day reported 16 deaths; meanwhile, residents in Peñas Blancas Massif area, Jinotega department (north) said at least 30 died in landslide 17 Nov. Finance minister 24 Nov reported 3mn people affected by hurricanes and estimated economic damage at \$742mn.

Caribbean

➔ **Haiti Insecurity remained high and political tensions increased over govt's plan to reform constitution.** Thousands 5 Nov demonstrated in capital Port-au-Prince against insecurity after rape and murder of female student, whose body was found 1 Nov in Delmas commune near Port-au-Prince; police used tear gas to disperse crowd. Police 9 Nov said three men had confessed to murder, including one whom G9 coalition of gangs had handed over to police 4 Nov. UN Integrated Office in Haiti 4 Nov said it was “very concerned about worsening security situation” including attacks by “armed gangs against the population”. Meanwhile, opposition party CPHREN 11 Nov rejected govt's attempts to reform constitution before legislative elections scheduled for March 2021, citing lack of cross-party

agreement; move followed President Jovenel Moïse's 30 Oct appointment of advisory committee to draft new constitution, which would then be submitted to referendum for approval. Several hundred anti-govt protesters under leadership of opposition party Pitit Desalin's chairman Jean-Charles Moïse 18 Nov gathered in Tabarre commune near Port-au-Prince, calling for president to resign and U.S. to withdraw its support; police cracked down on protesters, reportedly killing one and injuring two others. Govt 11 Nov declared "red alert" amid rise in COVID-19 cases.