

## Latin America and the Caribbean

↓ ✂ **Bolivia** Political crisis following controversial general elections worsened with growing unrest and polarisation, and reports of 29 killed as security forces cracked down on protesters supporting former President Morales, but with moves late-month to de-escalate tensions. Amid worsening unrest over alleged electoral fraud, Organization of American States audit 10 Nov identified “serious” irregularities in 20 Oct election won by Morales, recommended re-run; Morales agreed and, under pressure from armed forces, resigned along with senior figures from ruling Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party, accepting political asylum in Mexico. Legislative Assembly met to appoint caretaker govt, in session not attended by MAS legislators; conservative opposition senator Jeanine Áñez 12 Nov declared herself interim president, pledging new elections and “all measures necessary to pacify country”. Morales 15 Nov called for dialogue, saying he was still legally president, but accepted new elections be held without him “in the name of peace”. Protests and unrest intensified as Morales supporters expressed outrage over what they claimed was anti-indigenous right-wing coup, meeting with violent response from security forces. Nine people killed 15 Nov after army reportedly opened fire on demonstration in Cochabamba; ten protestors blockading fuel plant killed in El Alto outside La Paz 19 Nov, in what Morales and his supporters called “a massacre”. Thousands demonstrated against killings in capital La Paz 21 Nov, forcibly dispersed by security forces. Áñez 14 Nov issued decree exempting security forces from criminal responsibility in operations aimed at “restoration of order and public stability”; repealed decree 28 Nov following criticism from rights bodies. Interim govt 22 Nov filed criminal complaint against Morales for alleged sedition and terrorism for inciting protests; 23 Nov passed bill with support from MAS annulling Oct election, appointing new electoral board and stipulating new elections must be held within 120 days. With protester roadblocks causing some food and fuel shortages, agreement between govt and protest leaders 25 Nov to release imprisoned demonstrators, withdraw security forces and respect Morales’ social policies led to protesters lifting roadblocks in La Paz, El Alto and Chapare.

➡ **Chile** Mass anti-austerity protests continued across country, with ongoing incidents of violence, looting and clashes between demonstrators and security forces. President Piñera 7 Nov announced tightened security measures to counter vandalism, looting and rioting. In response to protesters’ demands, govt 11 Nov agreed to schedule referendum in April 2020 on whether to draft new constitution, and whether to create special constituent assembly. UN Human Rights Chief Michelle Bachelet 8 Nov sent fact-finding mission to investigate alleged abuses, including cases of excessive force, while public prosecutor reported over 2,000 allegations of human rights violations by security forces; President Piñera acknowledged some abuses in handling of protests but vowed commitment to investigation and prosecution of cases. Violent protests resurged from 22 Nov, prompting parliament 27 Nov to agree to advance security reforms, acknowledging “crisis of violence and vandalism that threatens our democracy”. Three people killed in protests during Nov, including thirteen-year-old boy who died after being hit by vehicle in Arica 21 Nov as he was taking part in roadblock; total of 23 people killed since protests began in Oct.

➡ **Colombia** Govt faced widespread protests over discontent with funding for higher education, pension reform, urban inequality, and perceived failure to advance 2016 peace agreement with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), while killings targeting indigenous communities continued. Hundreds of thousands joined largely peaceful national strike 21 Nov; ahead of action, govt deployed army in Bogotá and other major cities; national labour union reported house raids against several civil society and student leaders 19 Nov. Police in Bogotá fired teargas 21 Nov, some clashes reported with protesters. Dozens of public transport infrastructure sites damaged or destroyed and shops looted 21-22 Nov; three people reported killed in Valle del Cauca province in looting incidents. More than 100 people arrested, hundreds of civilians and security personnel injured; night-time curfew imposed in Bogotá 22 Nov and Cali 21 Nov. Violence rose from 22 Nov; three police killed in bomb at police station in Cauca, south west 22 Nov; eighteen-year-old killed by tear gas canister 23 Nov. Second national strike held 27 Nov; one protester reportedly seriously injured in Bogotá. Govt 24 Nov began National Dialogue to calm tensions, but strike organisers criticised content and structure; protesters planning continued demonstrations gave Presidency thirteen-point program of demands 26 Nov. Defence minister resigned 6 Nov following controversy over deaths of eight children in bombardment on FARC dissident camp late Aug, adding to previous accusations that military commanders pressured soldiers to increase their kill and capture numbers. Indigenous communities in Cauca continued to suffer assassinations as armed groups attempt to move into their autonomous territory for illicit economic and criminal activity; at least five killed late Oct-early Nov. Govt 4 Nov announced “shock” strategy in response, including additional 2,500 military personnel and fast-tracking development and employment initiatives in area; fearful of increasing militarisation, consortium of national human rights organisations broke off contact with govt. Mass displacement and forced community confinement continued in several areas; fighting between National Liberation Army (ELN) and Gaitanista criminal cartel displaced more than 2,000 in Alto Baudó, Chocó in west, 16-18 Nov.

➡ **Ecuador** Following violent protests over planned fuel price hike in Oct which govt was forced to withdraw, National Assembly 17 Nov rejected President Moreno’s proposed tax and monetary reforms, aimed at reducing fiscal deficit; International Monetary Fund 27 Nov backed amended version of tax and monetary reforms.

➡ **El Salvador** Relations between President Bukele and Legislative Assembly (LA) remained tense; LA 31 October shut down controversial commission it had created to investigate accusations that opposition parties Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) could have been behind Sept peak in homicides. Commission nonetheless presented report 26 Nov arguing no evidence was found, and suggested president dismiss govt official who made accusations. Bukele 12 Nov urged LA to approve funds for govt’s Territorial Control Plan to combat crime. Bukele 13 Nov met with new LA head and announced “180-degree shift” in relations with LA. Officials pointed to improvements in security and the fight against organised crime: Minister of Justice and Public Security 5 Nov stated that, as a result of Territorial Control Plan, security forces had seized more than 2,000 weapons, while Bukele reported Oct was least violent month since 1992. Director of prisons system 17 Nov claimed to have been able to curb communication from within jails to the outside. On international front,

Bukele 3 Nov recognised Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela and gave Venezuelan diplomats 48 hours to leave country.

➡ **Guatemala** Congress took further actions to delegitimise defunct anti-corruption body, the International Commission against Impunity (CICIG), while govt lifted state of emergency imposed to tackle organised drug crime in north east. Truth Commission created in Oct for people who consider themselves to be victims of CICIG 6 Nov requested list from Public Prosecutor with names of all national and foreign personnel who have worked for body; as of 11 Nov, Truth Commission had held 28 hearings with more than 20 pending. Congress 12 Nov adopted amendment to Criminal Code which provides for reduction of sentences up to 50% for those involved in certain criminal cases including corruption, illicit association, money laundering and electoral crimes, if they accept guilt; civil society groups denounced legal change as strengthening impunity and filed appeal at constitutional court. President Morales 4 Nov announced end of state of emergency in 22 municipalities and six departments in north east since early Sept, during which govt seized thousands of kilos of drugs and 75 tons of chemical precursors, and arrested 973 people. Govt temporarily closed Mexican border after two attacks 13 and 17 Nov on customs facilities and officers by alleged smugglers. U.S. 18 Nov issued rule allowing it to send migrants seeking protection at its southern border to Guatemala in compliance with July agreement designating it “safe third country”, and 21 Nov sent first migrant, a Honduran. U.S. 1 Nov announced extension of Temporary Protected Status for Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and other countries until Jan 2021, which provides nationals from these countries temporary permission to live and work in the U.S..

➡ **Haiti** Political stalemate continued, contributing to deteriorating security and humanitarian situation and violent protests demanding resignation of President Moïse. Turnout at ongoing anti-govt protests reportedly lower, although levels of violence increased; during protest attended by several hundreds people 10 Nov, masked protesters vandalised and looted businesses near Delmas. Journalist, police officer and two protesters wounded by gunfire during small protest in capital 18 Nov. NGO Amnesty International 31 Oct accused police of excessive force against protesters, firing live ammunition after Oct departure of UN peacekeepers. Report from Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 1 Nov stated at least 42 people killed and 86 injured since 15 Sept. With distribution of aid restricted by fuel shortages, roadblocks and protests, and UN reporting almost 3.7 million people in urgent need of food assistance, Moïse 15 Nov called for international support for humanitarian crisis. No significant progress in terms of negotiations, although Moïse claimed in 7 Nov interview that he was holding closed-door talks with civil society groups, private sector and members of opposition, and spoke of need for agreement allowing establishment of a Government of National Unity. Members of opposition met 9 and 10 Nov to discuss transition in case of Moïse’s resignation. The Consensual Alternative, an opposition platform, 20 Nov said they do not intend to negotiate with Moïse. International community continued attempts to facilitate dialogue, with U.S. ambassador to UN meeting with Moïse 20 Nov. U.S. 1 Nov announced extension of Temporary Protected Status for Haiti among other countries until Jan 2021.

➡ **Honduras** Protests demanding Hernández’s resignation continued, although at lower intensity following govt’s violent response and growing fear caused by

murders and kidnappings of social leaders. Ex-president Zelaya, leader of left-wing Freedom and Refoundation Party (Libre), accused govt of involvement in assault of party member who went missing 28 Oct, later found alive having been tortured and thrown into Río Grande river. Zelaya called for protest 22 Nov in support of Evo Morales in Bolivia and in support of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH); hundreds marched in capital Tegucigalpa. Congress 4 Nov approved six-month extension before new Penal Code enters into force, following requests from civil society groups concerned that it hardens penalties for participation in social protest and will benefit former officials imprisoned for embezzlement. Foreign Ministry and Organization of American States 13 Nov established commission to evaluate MACCIH, prompting concern from body's supporters and calls for extension of its mandate, scheduled to expire 15 Jan. U.S. 1 Nov announced extension of Temporary Protected Status for Honduras as well as Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and other countries until Jan 2021, which provides nationals from these countries temporary permission to live and work in the U.S..

➔ **Mexico** High-profile violent incidents continued, intensifying public debate and pressure on President López Obrador's govt domestically and from U.S.. Nine members of Mormon family including six children, most with double Mexican-U.S. nationality, killed in attack 5 Nov on border between Sonora and Chihuahua states (north); govt said attack was mistake by armed group, but family said they had been targeted previously. U.S. President Trump offered cooperation to wage "war" on cartels, with other U.S. Republican politicians calling for U.S. intervention or special forces operations on Mexican soil; López Obrador rejected proposal, stating his non-violent approach to insecurity is working. Trump 26 Nov said U.S. would designate cartels as foreign terrorist organisations, prompting Mexican govt to warn against violations of national sovereignty. Opinion polls showed significant drop in López Obrador's popularity. Violence continued in other regions. In Ciudad Juárez on U.S. border, 26 people were killed, 35 vehicles burnt, and four bomb threats received 5-8 Nov, allegedly by "Mexicles" organised crime group in response to state operation against it in local prison. Security forces killed seven suspected cartel members in Coahuila near U.S. border 30 Nov after group launched attack on Villa Union city hall. In San Vicente Coatlán, Oaxaca (south), five state police were killed in ambush by armed group 8 Nov, bringing the total number of police killed in 2019 to 333. Armed group 8 Nov set ablaze vehicles to block coastal highway of Guerrero state (south), close to community of Petatlán, which various non-state armed groups are competing over. Plastic bags allegedly containing remains of four young men were left on road outside Celaya, Guanajuato (centre) 9 Nov, with messages reportedly signed by Jalisco Cartel New Generation and threatening enemy group "El Cartel de Lima"; competition between groups has made Guanajuato one of Mexico's most violent states. Mexico offered asylum to Bolivian President Morales following his resignation (see Bolivia), leading to accusations govt was intervening in Bolivian affairs.

⚡ **Nicaragua** President Ortega's govt intensified threats and attacks on political opponents and churches, despite mounting international pressure. Political tensions surged following resignation of Bolivian President Morales 10 Nov (see Bolivia); Head of National Assembly and pro-govt trade unions condemned "fascist coup" that ousted Morales and called on Ortega govt supporters to mobilise and be on alert to

combat “enemy” action; group of pro-govt armed men 13 Nov released video warning they are ready to fight any coup attempt inside Nicaragua. Ortega 14 Nov hosted extraordinary meeting of Political Council of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and condemned what he called U.S.-sponsored coup in Bolivia and example of how elections could not be trusted to reflect people’s will. Govt increased crackdown on continuing protests, mostly small-scale protests in capital Managua by students, political opponents and hunger-striking mothers of political prisoners to request liberation of around 140 political detainees; police detained at least thirteen people assisting hunger strikers in church, and on 18 Nov attorney general accused sixteen people of illicitly carrying weapons. Hunger strikers eventually evacuated from church 22 Nov, in precarious health conditions. Police 30 Oct and 4 Nov attacked several reporters covering protests. International condemnation continued, including from UN Human Rights chief and EU foreign policy chief. U.S. 7 Nov imposed sanctions on three senior officials accused of human rights abuses, election fraud and corruption; Spain 16 Nov condemned govt’s attacks on opponents and churches where hunger strikes were being held. Organization of American States (OAS) condemned events and 19 Nov released special commission report recommending special session of OAS Permanent Council potentially leading to country’s expulsion from OAS; also calling for measures including resuming negotiations between govt and opposition and electoral reforms. OAS Permanent Council convened 25 Nov to discuss report, without taking further action. Shoot-out in Masaya 30 Nov left one police officer dead; police claimed episode involved criminal gang led by José Isaías Ugarte López, who allegedly participated in 2018 roadblocks.

➔ **Venezuela** Despite reports of attempts to revive Norway-facilitated negotiations between Maduro regime and opposition led by Juan Guaidó, prospects for resumption of talks remained remote; govt and minority parties involved in National Dialogue initiative continued to insist they offer route to political settlement. Process of releasing political prisoners appeared to have stalled, however month saw progress on formation of parliamentary commission that will consider changing composition of National Electoral Council, key element of deal struck between govt and minority parties. National Assembly 13 Nov approved nine-member committee that, along with yet-to-be-chosen members of civil society, will appoint commission; three members belong to ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). On international front, resignation and exile of Bolivian President Evo Morales (see Bolivia) following his controversial re-election bid gave encouragement to Venezuelan opposition; interim govt in La Paz immediately recognised Guaidó as interim president, along with El Salvador bringing number of countries who do so to 56. Guaidó called nationwide demonstrations for 16 Nov, however attendance in tens of thousands in Caracas and smaller numbers elsewhere seen as disappointing; thousands of govt supporters also rallied. Amid speculation over foreign policy position of new left-leaning Argentine govt, incoming Argentine FM 29 Nov said that his country would not leave Lima Group, set up in 2017 to address Venezuela’s crisis, and that foreign relations should not be ideological in nature; Argentina also likely to join Mexico-led Montevideo mechanism, which advocates unconditional talks between Venezuelan govt and opposition; however new Uruguayan government under Luis Lacalle seen as likely to leave it.