

# Latin America and the Caribbean

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## Andes

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➔ **Colombia Violence continued along Pacific Coast, fuelling mass displacement and forced confinement.** Fighting between rival local armed groups 6-7 Nov forced 173 families to flee port city of Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department; UN 11 Nov reported others remained confined within their neighbourhoods. In Nariño department, fighting between Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident factions 11 Nov displaced at least 110 people from Los Limones neighbourhood in Olaya Herrera municipality, while clashes between FARC dissidents and National Liberation Army (ELN) that week reportedly displaced 85 families from Indigenous reserves in Ricaurte municipality. Also in Nariño, thousands of coca growers late Oct-early Nov demonstrated for several days in a row to protest coca crop eradication programmes around Iscuandé municipality. Meanwhile, clashes between Gulf Clan, one of country's main criminal organisations, and state forces reported in Antioquia and Chocó departments: suspected Gulf Clan members 7 Nov ambushed military unit near Ituango municipality, Antioquia, killing four soldiers, and 10 Nov reportedly killed two police officers in Bahia Solano municipality, Chocó. Armed clashes between state forces and FARC dissidents, notably Second Marquetalia and Carlos Patiño Front, also reported late Oct-early Nov around Argelia municipality in Cauca department. Special Jurisdiction for Peace (established under 2016 peace deal between govt and FARC to handle cases deriving from conflict) 5 Nov added indictment of "enslavement" in charges against former FARC commanders in case investigating practice of kidnapping; FARC leadership, which has accepted all other charges in case, including crimes against humanity, 7 Nov rejected enslavement charge. On fifth anniversary of peace agreement, U.S. State Dept 23 Nov announced intent to revoke designation of FARC as terrorist group, while UN Sec-Gen Antonio Guterres 23-24 Nov visited Colombia, warned that "guaranteeing social leaders' and ex-combatants' security is vital to consolidate peace". President Duque 25 Nov said Bogotá had received formal request from U.S. to extradite Dairo Antonio Úsuga, alias Otoniel, leader of country's largest criminal organisation who was detained in Oct.

➔ **Venezuela Ruling party secured sweeping victory in regional and local elections amid low turnout and international concerns over irregularities, and International Criminal Court opened formal investigation into crimes against humanity in Venezuela.** In 21 Nov regional and local elections, ruling United Socialist Party won at least 19 out of 23 governor seats. In Barinas state, Supreme Court's electoral branch 29 Nov retroactively disqualified opposition candidate Freddy Superlano, who was slightly leading in vote count, and ordered fresh election in Jan, sparking outcry. Results brought into sharp relief weakness and lack of unity of opposition, which participated in elections for first time since 2017; turnout of 41.8% also highlighted widespread voter disaffection. Violent incidents reported on election day in San Francisco town (Zulia state): notably, ruling party supporters known as *colectivos* reportedly killed man and injured two other people outside voting centre. U.S. Sec State Antony Blinken 22 Nov said elections "grossly skewed", while Isabel Santos,

EU observation mission's chief observer, next day flagged irregularities including "arbitrary bans on candidates" and uneven playing field despite "better conditions" than in previous elections; in response, President Maduro 28 Nov called EU observers "enemies" and "spies". After withdrawing from Mexico talks with opposition in Oct, Maduro 21 Nov said negotiations would not resume until Washington answered for "kidnapping" of govt envoy Alex Saab, who was extradited to U.S. by Cape Verde in Oct on money-laundering charges. After three-day visit to Venezuela, International Criminal Court (ICC)'s Prosecutor Karim Khan 3 Nov announced formal investigation into crimes against humanity committed in country since April 2017, including allegations of extrajudicial killings and torture by security forces during crackdown on anti-govt protests in April-July 2017; move marks first time Latin American country faces formal ICC scrutiny for possible crimes against humanity. Maduro immediately said his govt disagreed with decision but would collaborate with ICC; Maduro and Khan same day signed memorandum of understanding stipulating govt would "adopt all necessary measures" to ensure justice was done, and ICC would provide "support and active engagement".

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## Central America and Mexico

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↓ **El Salvador** **President Bukele deployed military in response to surge in gang-related violence, and relations with U.S. deteriorated further.** After months of low violence rates, authorities 9-11 Nov recorded at least 42 homicides, mainly in and around capital San Salvador; upsurge of violence reportedly mostly driven by inter-gang killings. In response, Bukele 11 Nov ordered military to patrol streets; in following days, security forces detained dozens of gang members. Violence immediately dropped with police recording "zero homicide" nationwide 12 Nov. News website Infobae next day alleged escalation of violence came after break in negotiations involving govt, MS-13 and 18th Street gangs; govt however denies negotiating with gangs. Following unprecedented anti-govt protests in Sept-Oct, Bukele 4 Nov suggested U.S. is financing NGOs to act as political opponents, and 9 Nov presented "Foreign Agents" bill to Legislative Assembly; bill aims to "prohibit foreign interference" in domestic affairs notably by imposing 40% tax on foreign donations to civil society and media organisations. Over 50 NGOs 16 Nov expressed concern that law might affect freedom of press and association and hinder continuity of their projects. Prosecutors 22 Nov raided offices of seven NGOs, allegedly as part of investigation on embezzlement of public funds, but rights activists denounced move as intimidation. American technology company Apple 24 Nov alerted over two dozen reporters, activists, opposition and ruling party New Ideas politicians of potential govt surveillance of their iPhones. Attorney general 17 Nov urged National Assembly to withdraw immunity of two New Ideas lawmakers to investigate them over allegations of accepting bribes from U.S. to plot against their own party, which U.S. embassy denied. U.S. chargé d'affaires in El Salvador, Jean Manes, 22 Nov announced her departure, said bilateral relations currently "paused" due to San Salvador's apparent lack of interest in dialogue.

➔ **Honduras** **Despite deadly violence against local politicians in lead-up to polls, win of opposition presidential candidate Xiomara Castro accepted peacefully by month's end.** Following 28 Nov general elections, electoral authorities 30 Nov presented preliminary results, giving opposition

candidate Castro 20-point lead in presidential race with 53% of votes against 34% for ruling National Party candidate Nasry Asfura. Voter turnout high at 68%. Liberal Party candidate Yani Rosenthal, as well as private sector leaders, 29 Nov recognised Castro's victory, and National Party next day acknowledged defeat. Legislative elections result however still unclear by month's end. First part of Nov saw worrying deadly attacks dominate electoral campaign. In Francisco Morazán department (centre), unidentified assailants overnight 5-6 Nov shot and killed local politician and member of ruling National Party of Honduras (PNH) Renán Godoy Martín in Talanga municipality, and 13 Nov killed San Juan de Flores' mayor and opposition Liberal Party of Honduras (PLH) official Francisco Gaitán Agüero. In neighbouring La Paz department, unidentified assailants 11 Nov killed Óscar Moya, local PLH official and municipal councillor in Santiago de Puringla. In Santa Bárbara department (north), gunmen 13 Nov killed local opposition Liberty and Re-Foundation (LIBRE) official Elvir Casaña in San Luis city. Internationally, authorities 4 Nov detained opposition presidential candidate Santos Rodríguez Orellana in capital Tegucigalpa on money-laundering charges. International partners reiterated calls for peaceful elections. Head of EU Electoral Observation Mission, Željana Zovko, 1 Nov urged politicians to end campaign of "fear and polarisation", while UN Office in Honduras 9 Nov called on all candidates "to desist from any action that violates human rights". UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet 23 Nov expressed "deep concern" over political violence, said her office had recorded 63 cases including 29 killings since Sept 2020.

➔ **Mexico Armed group violence continued at high levels with renewed fighting for control of trafficking routes reported in several states.** Jalisco Cartel New Generation (CJNG) stepped up offensive in attempt to extend control over Michoacán state (centre). Notably, CJNG 6 Nov reportedly killed seven men and left dismembered bodies in Hidalgo city with note addressed to rival Los Correa Cartel; 8-9 Nov raided Chinicuila town and Tepalcatepec city, leaving six soldiers injured and reportedly causing displacement of around 1,500 families. Also in Michoacán state, unidentified armed group 1 Nov killed 11 farmers in Tangamandapio town. In Mexico state (also centre), suspected members of criminal group La Familia Michoacana 4 Nov killed at least two police officers in ambush in Texcatitlán town. Authorities 15 Nov detained wife of CJNG leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes in Zapopan locality, Jalisco state (centre); in apparent retaliation, suspected CJNG members next day kidnapped two navy personnel in same locality, releasing them 19 Nov. Escalating clashes between criminal groups and state forces also reported in Zacatecas state (centre). Notably, criminal group 8 Nov kidnapped and later killed three police officers in Loreto municipality; in apparent gang-related killings, at least 16 bodies found 18 and 23 Nov in Zacatecas. Meanwhile in Quintana Roo state (south), shootout between suspected criminal groups 4 Nov killed two group members in Cancun resort town, casting doubts on security conditions in Mexico's biggest tourist hub. In Chiapas state (also south), paramilitary group 3-5 Nov attacked Indigenous community in Aldama town amid land conflict, reportedly forcing 3,000 to flee. Violence also erupted in Chiapas as law enforcement tried to contain thousands of migrants heading north: after National Guard 31 Oct opened fire on truck carrying migrants, killing one, clashes 4 Nov left several injured on both sides. Govt 23 Nov said most migrants had accepted offer to quit caravan in exchange for legal status in Mexico. U.S. authorities 30 Nov

sentenced wife of jailed Mexican drug lord Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán to three years imprisonment for helping Sinaloa drug cartel.

↓ **Nicaragua Country’s international isolation reached unprecedented levels after President Ortega secured fourth term in elections widely condemned as sham.** Supreme Electoral Council 10 Nov said Ortega had won 75.9% of votes in 7 Nov presidential election; also said turnout reached 65.3%. However, NGO Urnas Abiertas, which deployed 1,450 observers to 563 polling stations across country, 7 Nov estimated turnout much lower at 18.5%. Vote drew widespread international condemnation, further isolating country. U.S. President Biden 7 Nov condemned election as “sham” and 10 Nov signed into law “Renacer Act”, expanding sanctions on key members of Ortega’s govt and restricting multilateral bank lending. U.S. Treasury Dept 15 Nov sanctioned Nicaraguan public ministry and nine senior govt officials, and Biden next day banned all members of Nicaraguan govt from entering U.S. Meanwhile, Organization of American States (OAS) 12 Nov passed resolution stating elections “were not free, fair or transparent, and lacked democratic legitimacy”. Govt 19 Nov announced Nicaragua’s withdrawal from OAS. Inter-American Court of Human Rights 22 Nov declared Nicaragua in “contempt” for refusing to comply with court’s recent orders to release 21 political prisoners; warned it will refer Nicaragua’s decision to OAS General Assembly. Meanwhile, repression of opponents continued. Urnas Abiertas 12 Nov reported arrest of 35 opponents around polling day, including 23 on eve of election. Unidentified armed men 22 Nov arrested former Ambassador to OAS and outspoken Ortega critic Edgard Parrales in capital Managua. New head of Episcopal Conference, Bishop Carlos Enrique Herrera Gutiérrez, same day stated Church’s readiness to mediate talks between govt and opposition.

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## **Caribbean**

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➔ **Haiti Gangs continued to assert power through violence and control over access to fuel.** Grand Ravine gang and G9 gang coalition-affiliated Ti Bwa gang early Nov clashed for control of Martissant neighbourhood in capital Port-au-Prince; turf war reportedly left several killed including at least one civilian. UN Children’s Fund 2 Nov said at least seven schools in and around capital Port-au-Prince forced to pay gangs in exchange for security since early Sept. Police 8-9 Nov clashed with G9 members near Varreux fuel terminal in attempt to lift weeks-long blockade on fuel shipments. G9 leader Jimmy “Barbecue” Chérizier 12 Nov lifted blockade of Varreux fuel terminal for one week, warned blockade would resume if PM Ariel Henry did not resign in that period, but fuel deliveries still ongoing late-Nov. U.S. authorities 11 Nov arrested two Haitian nationals in Florida for allegedly supplying weapons to 400 Mawozo gang, which kidnapped 17 foreign missionaries in Oct; two abductees reportedly released mid-Nov. Amid increase in kidnappings for ransom late Nov, heavily armed individuals 23 Nov ambushed bus on road in Artibonite department in north, reportedly kidnapping 15 passengers; 400 Mawozo gang 26 Nov abducted four schoolchildren in Croix-des-Bouquets commune near Port-au-Prince. National Human Rights Defence Network early Nov denounced PM Ariel Henry’s late-Oct decision to appoint Frantz Elbe as new police chief due to poor human rights record including suspected role in disappearance of anti-govt activists in early 2000s. Following weeks of political impasse, Henry 24 Nov swore in new

cabinet; major civil society initiative known as “Montana Agreement”, which was created in Aug with view to helping resolve political crisis, 30 Nov said it had identified four potential candidates for president and PM positions. Amid escalating security crisis, U.S. early Nov urged its nationals to leave country. Neighbouring Dominican Republic President Abinader 3 Nov said border security strengthened by over 3,500 men, with Interior Minister Jesús Vásquez 8 Nov describing Haiti as “main threat” for Santo Domingo.