

Latin America and the Caribbean

Southern Cone

➔ **Brazil** **Tensions ran high in lead-up to presidential elections as President Bolsonaro continued attacks on Supreme Court; concerns rose over lawlessness in Amazon forest.** Preparations for elections scheduled in October continued amid deepening tensions between Bolsonaro administration and Supreme Court. Bolsonaro 6 June criticised Supreme Court justice and current president of Supreme Electoral Court for meeting international ambassadors to discuss electoral process, accusing justice of suggesting president might not accept possible defeat in October polls. Bolsonaro next day criticised Supreme Court removal of congressman Fernando Francischini over promoting fake news during 2018 elections, questioned if Supreme Court would “have the courage” to remove him from office too for raising same “reasonable doubts” over electoral process. Authorities 22 June arrested former education minister and two evangelical pastors for allegedly providing federal funds to mayors who would help Bolsonaro’s campaign; all three released next day. Lawlessness in Amazon forest came under spotlight after British journalist Dom Phillips and Brazilian indigenous expert Bruno Pereira 5 June disappeared in Javari Valley, Amazon region; rescue operators 15 June recovered bodies. Police 8, 15, and 18 June arrested three suspects. Local indigenous group UNIVAJA 17 June questioned police statement that killers acted alone, saying it had warned police since 2021 of organised criminal groups operating in Javari. Federal Police 21 June opened new investigation into possible role of illegal fishing groups in murders. Meanwhile, in Mato Grosso do Sul state (south west), clashes between security forces and members of Guarani-Kaiowá indigenous group 24 June in Amambai municipality killed one.

Andes

↓ **Ecuador** **Anti-govt protests spread across country, turning violent in some areas as demonstrators clashed with security forces.** Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) 13 June called for nationwide anti-govt protests, demanding President Lasso’s administration freeze fuel prices, declare moratorium on small farmers’ bank debts, and limit oil and mining expansion. Authorities 14 June arrested CONAIE’s President Leónidas Iza; released him next day. Protests 14 June began with peaceful roadblocks; CONAIE 15 June said over 9,000 protesters had joined roadblocks in 14 of 24 provinces. Violence however subsequently escalated; notably, after protestors 14 June tried to enter one of state-owned oil Petroecuador’s stations in Sucumbíos province, clashes with security forces erupted, leaving ten soldiers wounded. Govt 17 June declared state of exception in Imbabura, Cotopaxi, and Pichincha provinces; 20 June expanded order to Chimborazo, Tungurahua and Pastaza provinces in bid to curb demonstrations. According to interior minister, violent clashes 21 June flared in Puyo city between soldiers and demonstrators reportedly armed with guns, spears and explosives, leaving one protestor dead and six police officers wounded; govt said 18 more officers

were missing following attack on police station in Puyo. Lasso 22 June claimed govt was ready for dialogue; Iza said talks were conditioned on state of emergency being repealed, which govt refused. Thousands 22 June demonstrated in capital Quito. Authorities 23 June said at least five people had died since protests began, with 120 police officers injured and over 100 detained. CONAIE and other organisations 25 June met with govt officials; Lasso 26 June ended state of emergency and cut fuel price by 10 cents per gallon; CONAI 27 June said price reduction was “insufficient and without guarantee”. National Assembly 25-26 June held two sessions to debate opposition’s proposal to remove Lasso from office; in vote held 28 June, 80 lawmakers voted for measure, 12 votes shy of 92 needed to ouster Lasso who clung onto power; govt same day called off talks after military accused protestors of killing soldier. Govt 29 June reintroduced state of emergency in four provinces, citing escalating violence, and agreed to talks mediated by Catholic church.

↑ Colombia Despite tense electoral atmosphere, all parties recognised presidential victory of Gustavo Petro, paving way for peaceful transfer of power 7 August; Truth Commission published long awaited report on decades-long conflict.

In second round of presidential elections held 19 June, left-leaning candidate and former guerrilla Gustavo Petro won with 50.4 per cent of vote, defeating populist and businessman Rodolfo Hernández; victory marks first time leftist candidate has won presidential elections in recent history. Hernández and former president Iván Duque immediately recognised result, paving way for peaceful transfer of power on 7 August. U.S. Sec of State Antony Blinken and UN Sec Gen António Guterres 20 June welcomed “strength” of Colombian democracy. National Liberation Army same day signalled willingness to advance talks with incoming govt. Petro 22 June announced he had spoken with Venezuelan govt “to open the borders and restore the full exercise of human rights at the border”. Amid fears of violence and concern about possible Petro victory, military 19 June deployed 320,000 troops to polling stations and other key infrastructure on election day, 20,000 more than in previous elections; Ombudsman’s office same day said elections proceeded “normally” notwithstanding “isolated incidents against security forces” in Caquetá (south) and Norte de Santander (north east) departments. Petro 14 June issued open letter to security forces in bid to win support among rank-and-file, notably suggesting improvements to social benefits and promotion opportunities; largest associations of retired military officers rejected proposals. Head of army Gen Eduardo Zapateiro 28 June announced resignation. Authorities 10 June confirmed death of Ricardo Abel Ayala Orrego, alias Cabuyo, head of 36th Front of dissidences of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in Antioquia department (north west), bringing number of dissident leaders killed in 2022 to five. Meanwhile, unknown assailants 27 June killed environmental leader and member of leftist coalition Pacto Histórico Juan David Ochoa in Granada municipality, Antioquia department (north west). Truth Commission 28 June published long-awaited report on conflict between authorities and FARC, said at least 450,664 people killed and 121,768 people disappeared between 1985-2018; recommended revised approach to drug policy, end to aerial fumigations that eradicate coca plants, and reforms to military.

➡ Venezuela Talks about resumption of Mexico dialogue continued, govt supporters attacked opposition leader Juan Guaidó, and President Maduro embarked on international tour to strengthen foreign relations.

While U.S. govt and Venezuelan opposition continued to insist during month that resumption of suspended Mexico talks between govt and opposition was imminent, series of violent attacks against opposition leader Juan Guaidó during country tour cast doubt. Chavista militants 4 June tried to prevent Guaidó from speaking in Maracaibo municipality by throwing chairs at organisers; 11 June forced Guaidó to flee meeting in Cojedes state. U.S. Sec of State Antony Blinken 12 June and European External Action Service 15 June condemned violence. In slight easing of sanctions, U.S. State Department reportedly sent letters to European oil companies Eni and Repsol early June allowing export of sanctioned Venezuelan oil to Europe for first time in two years, in apparent move to collect billions in unpaid debt owed by govt. U.S. Treasury Department 17 June removed Carlos Malpica Flores, former national treasurer and nephew of first lady, from U.S. sanctions list. Internationally, U.S. barred Venezuela, along with Nicaragua and Cuba, from 6-10 June Americas Summit in Los Angeles, defying pressure from Mexican President López Obrador, who subsequently boycotted event. U.S. President Biden 8 June held phone conversation with opposition leader Guaidó, reaffirmed support for interim leader and need for dialogue despite not inviting him to summit. U.S. delegation 27 June visited capital Caracas in attempt to secure release of detained Americans. In apparent bid to show he is not internationally isolated, Maduro 7 June embarked on trip to Turkey, Iran, Algeria, Kuwait and Qatar. In Iran, Maduro 11 June signed 20-year cooperation plan with govt. Venezuelan govt 4 June announced it would hold “counter-summit on 28-29 June” in San Cristobal city near Colombian border to reject Madrid NATO summit, which focused on Ukraine war. Meanwhile, Colombia’s President-elect Gustavo Petro 22 June spoke with Maduro about his commitment to reopen shared border, closed since 2015; Maduro reaffirmed willingness to “re-establish normalcy” at border.

➡ **El Salvador Authorities continued crackdown on gangs despite international criticism; economic situation worsened amid Bitcoin’s volatility.** President Bukele 1 June highlighted success of his security measures to Legislative Assembly, saying “we have almost won the war against the gangs”. National Police 24 June reported authorities had arrested over 42,250 alleged gang members since state of emergency began late March. Legislative Assembly 21 June approved third extension of state of emergency, while Bukele 22 June announced construction of “Terrorism Confinement Centre”, due to house around 20,000 gang members. Shootout between suspected gang members and security forces 28 June, left three police dead in Santa Ana department (centre); Bukele same day said govt would “ramp up” war against gangs. Govt crackdown on gangs continued to prompt condemnation. Notably, NGO Amnesty International 2 June accused govt of “massive human rights violations”; Human Rights Ombudsman 9 June announced his office had received nearly 2,000 complaints of human rights violations in first two months of state of emergency (27 March- 25 May); and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights 13 June expressed concern about arbitrary detentions. As of 24 June, human rights groups reported at least 52 deaths since 27 March. Meanwhile, Bukele’s relations with U.S. deteriorated further. According to Associated Press media outlet, Bukele, who did not attend 6-10 June Americas Summit held in Los Angeles, U.S., 9 June declined to speak with U.S. Sec of State Antony Blinken. U.S. State Department 24 June called on country to “immediately extradite” some 15 MS12 gang leaders; govt had yet to respond by end of month despite extradition treaty with U.S.. Economic prospects continued to worsen amid concerns that

Bukele's renewed tensions with U.S. and multilateral financial institutions could impact govt's ability to access foreign funds and investments in future. Central Bank 8 June announced that inflation reached 7.5 per cent in May, highest rate since 2010. Bitcoin 24 June plunged to around \$20,000.

➔ **Honduras Govt continued to make progress on tackling corruption and first signs of disagreement with U.S. emerged.** President Castro's govt continued to advance fight against corruption. Notably, court 10 June sentenced Marco Bográn, former executive of govt agency responsible for procuring emergency medical supplies, to ten years in prison for overpricing purchase of more than 470,000 masks and seven mobile hospitals during COVID-19 pandemic. Authorities 10 June began process of seizing assets belonging to extradited former head of National Police Juan Carlos Bonilla. Meanwhile, court 20 June sentenced former head of hydroelectric dam company Desarrollos Energéticos (DESA) to 22 years in prison for role in assassination of environmentalist Berta Cáceres. Month brought first signs of disagreement with U.S.. FM Eduardo Enrique Reina 6-10 June attended Americas Summit hosted by U.S. in Los Angeles; Castro did not attend due to U.S. administration's exclusion of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. At summit, U.S. confirmed nearly \$3.2 bn of new investments in northern Central America to stem migration. UN Sec Gen 9 June met Reina, reiterated support for immediate establishment of International Commission against Impunity in Honduras (CICIH); Reina said commission could be established before end of year. EU Ambassador 13 June said EU would not rule out supporting commission as long as it is independent.

➔ **Mexico Criminal violence continued at high levels, with rising deadly attacks on security forces; ruling party MORENA consolidated governorship positions ahead of 2024 presidential elections.** In Guerrero state (south), two unidentified assailants 6 June killed chicken vendor in market in Chilpancingo municipality; two more were attacked 9 June in same market, leaving one dead; six more assassinated 11 June, including one child; attacks apparently committed by criminal group looking to extract protection payments from sector. In Chiapas state (south), unidentified gunmen 8 June shot dead Rubén de Jesús Valdez Díaz, mayor of Teopisca city, making him 17th mayor to be killed during López Obrador's presidency since Dec 2018. In Tamaulipas state (centre), unknown assailant 29 June killed local reporter in state capital Ciudad Victoria amid ongoing targeting of journalists. Meanwhile, dozens of armed individuals 14 June confronted each other in San Cristóbal de la Casas municipality in apparent competition over two local market centres and related extortion and illicit drug activities. In Mexico state (centre), armed confrontation between security forces and suspected members of La Familia Michoacana 14 June left eleven dead in Texcaltitlán municipality. Violence against security forces also intensified. In Nuevo Leon State (north east), unidentified gunmen 26 June ambushed and killed six police officers in Anáhuac municipality; in Tamaulipas state (centre), armed men 26 June ambushed police patrol in Mante municipality, killing one police officer; and in Guanajuato state (centre), assailants 26 June killed former police director. Authorities 11-12 June recorded 257 homicides nationwide, making it second most violent weekend in 2022. Ruling party MORENA 5 June won four out of six governorships up for election in Quintana Roo, Hidalgo, Oaxaca and Tamaulipas states, lost Durango and Aguascalientes. MORENA now controls 22 out of 32 state governorships. President López Obrador following day called upon MORENA leaders aspiring for presidency

in 2024 elections to start discussing their programs with party members, who will decide on candidate in internal vote; Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum, FM Marcelo Ebrard and Interior Minister Adán Augusto López are all frontrunners.

➡ **Nicaragua Crackdown on civil society organisations continued apace, U.S. and EU took further steps to condemn govt, and parliament authorised entry of Russian troops to combat illicit activities at sea.**

National Assembly 2 June cancelled legal permits of 93 NGOs, 10 and 13 June 26 more international NGOs, 15-16 June 191 national NGOs, 26 June 101 more NGOs, bringing total number banned since Dec 2018 to around 760. National Police 10 June raided and closed media outlet “Trinchera de la Noticia” in capital Managua. Persecution of religious leaders increased. Notably, police 1 June arrested Catholic priest Manuel Salvador García in Nandaime town, Granada (centre), on charges of aggression against woman, becoming first Church representative detained since Ortega returned to power. After said woman refused to press charges against García, judge 22 June sentenced him to two years in prison for aggression against five others. Govt 28 June ordered closure of Catholic radio station in diocese of Matagalpa (north), making it second Catholic Church-owned station to be banned from broadcasting in last two months. U.S. and EU took additional measures to pressure govt. Notably, European Parliament 9 June approved resolution condemning systematic repression of opposition; U.S. Sec of State Antony Blinken 13 June announced visa restrictions on 93 individuals accused of undermining democracy, including judges, lawmakers and govt officials. U.S. Treasury 17 June sanctioned state-owned mining company Empresa Nicaraguense de Minas (ENIMINAS) and its president, Ruy Delgado López. Meanwhile, National Assembly 14 June ratified authorisation for entry of 180 Russian troops into country to participate in operations against illicit activities in Caribbean and Pacific Ocean.

Caribbean

➡ **Haiti Amid political stalemate, gang violence continued to run high, notably with group seizing control of country’s highest court.**

Negotiations between so-called Montana Accord (who have proposed two-year transitional plan that includes five-member presidential college and prime minister) and acting PM Ariel Henry had yet to start by end of month, as both parties during month fell short of agreeing on terms and agenda of discussions. Amid ongoing political impasse, hundreds of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide’s supporters 26 June marched to his residence in capital Port-au-Prince, calling for his return to power. Gang violence continued to disrupt security. Members of “5 Segonn” gang 10 June attacked Court of First Instance in Port-au-Prince, country’s highest court, in fourth such attack since May, storming and seizing control of building; gang 14 June reportedly set fire to court files and removed safes, furniture, computers and vehicles. Police had not been able to regain control of building by end of month. 400 Mawozo gang members 7 June released three of eight Turkish missionaries kidnapped 8 May during bus hijacking in Croix-des-Bouquets neighbourhood, Port-au-Prince; 15 June released five remaining hostages. Police 26 June arrested alleged “Baz Pilat” gang leader Ezekiel Alexander; supporters 27-28 June staged protests in Carrefour-Feuilles, Port-au-Prince, demanding his release. 1 June marked anniversary of gangs taking control of National Route 2 section in Martissant neighbourhood, Port-au-

Prince. U.S.-based National Human Rights Defense Network 10 June reported armed individuals murdered 44 police officers between 17 June 2021 and 6 June 2022. UN Sec Gen António Guterres 16 June reported gang violence killed at least 782 Haitians and saw 540 kidnapped 1 Jan-31 May 2022. Haitian chancellor Jean Victor Génés same day affirmed police commitment to combatting gangs and called for international assistance toward operations, said “free democratic elections” were “not conceivable” in current environment.