



Latin America and the Caribbean

Southern Cone

➔ **Brazil** **President Bolsonaro’s attempt to challenge election result failed amid dwindling protests.**

Protests challenging President Bolsonaro’s electoral defeat slowly lost momentum. Following Oct presidential election in which Bolsonaro narrowly lost to Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva, unrest early Nov continued. Notably, footage showed Federal Highway Police agents 1 Nov helping pro-Bolsonaro protesters block highway in São Paulo state. Several blockades resulted in violence, including when car 2 Nov ran into barricade, also in São Paulo state, injuring at least 16 people. Bolsonaro same day called on protesters to lift blockades, while Supreme Court 11 Nov ordered law enforcement to clear all roads. While some highways remained blocked until 18 Nov, all roads eventually cleared by late Nov as protests dwindled.

Bolsonaro contested results, but court rejected request. Amid some lingering protests, Bolsonaro – who had not conceded defeat – and his Liberal Party 22 Nov filed petition formally contesting results, despite 1 Nov saying he would respect constitution; Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes next day rejected challenge.

Andes

➔ **Colombia** **Authorities made progress with “Total Peace” plan as talks with ELN got under way; President Petro pledged greater cooperation with Venezuela during first official visit to Caracas.**

Govt made strides in initiating “Total Peace” plan. President Petro 4 Nov signed legislation giving govt legal authority to: negotiate with armed groups and “criminal structures of high impact” (outfits with sustained capacity to carry out violence threatening civilians); suspend arrest warrants for individuals participating in dialogue; and gradually eliminate mandatory military service in favour of social service. Meanwhile, peace talks with National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas 21 Nov began in Venezuelan capital Caracas, group’s first negotiations with govt since 2019. ELN same day issued statement saying negotiating team “has the backing of the entire organisation” amid concerns around its decentralised structure, which has impeded past negotiations.

Localised armed and criminal violence rose, notably in Arauca and Valle de Cauca. In initial outreach to armed and criminal actors, govt requested demonstrations of good-will through reduction in violence against civilians; however, attacks and other

types of violent control increased during month. Notably, brief calm in Arauca department shattered after Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) dissident faction known as 28th Front 8 Nov released audio promising to kill 300 civilians, likely including social leaders, allegedly linked to rival group ELN. In port city of Buenaventura, Valle de Cauca department, clashes resumed early Nov between Los Shotas and Los Espartanos criminal groups, breaking 2 Oct truce and causing forced displacements and confinements. Meanwhile, Petro 5 Nov signed Colombia's ratification of Escazú Agreement, intended to protect environmental activists, who have been heavily targeted during country's armed conflict. Govt 28 Nov announced offensive against armed groups operating in border areas and called for collaboration from neighbours.

Petro visited Venezuela amid ongoing efforts to normalise relations. Petro met Venezuelan President Maduro 1 Nov for first official presidential visit to Caracas, during which they signed joint communiqué pledging cooperation in areas such as trade, border security, consular services and transport links; Colombian Senate 2 Nov unanimously approved bill to better regulate international transport of cargo and passengers between two countries, thereby improving commercial ties and reducing border insecurity.

↓ **Ecuador Gang violence surged in coastal cities following mass prison transfers, prompting President Lasso to declare state of emergency in three provinces.**

Criminal violence spiked across several cities, triggering state of emergency. Following transfer of 1,002 inmates from Guayaquil's Guayas prison to other detention facilities controlled by rival gangs, criminal gangs 1 Nov launched at least 18 attacks, half of them in coastal cities of Guayaquil and Esmeraldas, leaving five police officers and one civilian dead. President Guillermo Lasso same day called incidents "a declaration of open war" and imposed state of emergency in Guayas and Esmeraldas provinces, 4 Nov extended measure to Santa Domingo de los Tsáchilas province. Police 2 Nov arrested 28 people while Defence Minister Luis Lara same day announced deployment of 1,400 soldiers to Guayaquil. According to Interior Minister Juan Zapata, police 1-15 Nov captured 2,878 suspects.

Deadly prison clashes between rival gangs continued. Amid threat of mass prisoner transfer disrupting gang control within prisons, fighting 2 Nov broke out at Guayas prison, leaving two dead and six injured; inmates from Esmeraldas prison in Esmeraldas province 1 Nov also kidnapped and then released eight prison officers. In capital Quito's El Inca prison, violent confrontation between rival criminal groups Los Lobos and Las Ñetas 7 Nov left five inmates dead; hours later, President Lasso announced security forces had regained control of prison. In other incident at El Inca prison, at least ten inmates 18 Nov died during violent riots that broke out after authorities moved two gang leaders – "Bermudez" from Los Lobos and "Anchundia" from R7 – to maximum security facility. Authorities 28 Nov nearly doubled number of prison guards, announcing 1,461 new personnel.

↑ **Venezuela Dialogue between authorities and opposition resumed in Mexico after one year on hold as sides signed long-awaited agreement to alleviate humanitarian crisis.**

Govt and opposition signed humanitarian deal during resumed Mexico talks. Govt and opposition 26 Nov re-joined Norwegian-facilitated Mexico City dialogue,

suspended since Oct 2021, and signed long-awaited deal to gradually unfreeze some \$3bn in Venezuelan state assets held abroad; agreement is intended to provide finance, under UN supervision, for improvements in electricity infrastructure as well as health, education and food projects, to alleviate humanitarian crisis. UN Sec-Gen Guterres 27 Nov welcomed agreement and called on parties to “remain fully engaged” in negotiations. Going forward, discussions expected to centre around resolution of underlying political conflict. U.S. 26 Nov responded to advances in negotiations by exempting oil company Chevron from sanctions, allowing it to expand oil production and sell it on U.S. market. Oil Minister Tareck El Aissami 29 Nov announced govt had signed contracts with Chevron.

Preparation for opposition primaries continued. Opposition alliance Unitary Platform 15 Nov installed commission charged with organising primaries in 2023 to select single candidate for 2024 presidential election. Commission must decide on number of contentious issues, such as whether to seek assistance from govt-controlled National Electoral Council and/or international electoral bodies, and how to ensure participation of Venezuelan diaspora, which currently numbers around 7mn. Law Professor Jesús María Casal, who chairs commission, 15 Nov said it would immediately begin consultations with political parties, potential candidates and civil society.

Colombian and Venezuelan leaders pledged cooperation during Caracas meeting. As Colombian President Petro 1 Nov conducted first official visit to capital Caracas, he and President Maduro signed joint communiqué pledging cooperation in areas such as trade, border security, consular services and transport links. Meeting however failed to produce many concrete commitments. Notably, Venezuela did not agree to return to inter-American human rights system, despite Colombian govt’s indications it would, nor did communiqué mention Venezuela’s return to Andean Community trading bloc, despite Maduro’s comments to the contrary 1 Nov.

Central America and Mexico

➡ **El Salvador Govt’s heavy-handed approach to gangs continued amid eighth renewal of state of exception; further evidence of past ties between officials and gangs emerged.**

Bukele administration continued its mano dura approach to tackle gangs. Vice Minister of Justice and director of prison system Osiris Luna Meza 1 Nov posted video of non-gang affiliated prisoners destroying tombs of gang members, part of new effort to erase all gang symbolism in country. Legislative Assembly same day approved series of reforms that ease proceedings to approve wiretapping through newly established Examining Courts; reforms exempt attorney general’s office from submitting reports on wiretaps to judges and strip human rights ombudsman’s office of oversight role. President Bukele 23 Nov announced phase 5 of “Territorial Control Plan”, called Extraction, intended to “extract every last terrorist from the communities of El Salvador”. Meanwhile, Legislative Assembly 15 Nov renewed state of exception for eighth time, while ministry of security 21 Nov reported arrest of over 58,000 suspected gang members since state of exception began in March. Police reported stark reduction of daily homicides between Jan and 14 Nov, putting 2022 on track to break record low murder rate of 2021. However, UN Committee against

Torture 25 Nov published report expressing concern over arrests and irregularities committed under state of exception.

Media continued to expose past ties between authorities and gangs. Association of Journalists of El Salvador 3 Nov accused authorities of harassment and threats against journalist Juan Martínez d'Aubuisson after investigation published four days earlier found that current Attorney General Rodolfo Delgado had defended MS-13 collaborators in the past. Meanwhile, online news outlet El Faro 7 Nov revealed that National Civil Police had investigated Luna Meza in 2020 for possible links to gang leaders and drug traffickers.

In other important developments. Bukele 9 Nov announced that El Salvador and China will sign free trade agreement.

➡ **Honduras** **Rising extortion rates prompted govt to declare national emergency; discussions over election of Supreme Court members inflamed political frictions.**

Govt declared national emergency amid mounting levels of extortion. Supreme Court president 4 Nov said establishment of UN-backed International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras will not be enough to curb increasing rates of violent crime if national institutions are not strengthened. Head of Council for Private Enterprise 14 Nov said extortion was “getting out of hand” and called on authorities to intervene. Head of Police Gustavo Sánchez 24 Nov released plan to tackle extortion and President Castro same day declared national security emergency, announcing measures such as border militarisation and bank controls to “eradicate extortion”. Sánchez 25 Nov said operations will initially focus on 120 neighbourhoods in capital Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, two most populous and violent cities.

Efforts to elect new Supreme Court aggravated political tensions. Amid brewing political crisis, which emerged mid-Oct after ruling party Libre announced alliance with Honduras' Saviour Party (PSH) had broken down, political debate largely centred on election of new Supreme Court members. Nominating committee tasked with selecting candidates 1 Nov published list of 185 candidates for 2023-2030 term, trimmed down to 105 on 18 Nov. Committee has until mid-Jan to forward list of 45 candidates to National Congress, which in turn elects 15 members. Former President and Libre coordinator Manuel Zelaya 11 Nov acknowledged that selection of Court justices is guided by political interests and announced negotiations with opposition National Party on distribution of Supreme Court seats between each party; VP and head of PSH Salvador Nasralla same day insisted on PHS participation in any negotiations. Leader of National Party, Tomás Zambrano, 14 Nov said Libre had not shown willingness to negotiate in good faith.

➡ **Mexico** **Criminal violence remained high, govt efforts to push through legislation extending military control over policing met resistance, and opposition against electoral reform mounted.**

Lethal violence remained high. In central Guanajuato state, unknown assailants 6 Nov killed mother looking for her missing son in Abasolo city, becoming fifth volunteer search activist to be murdered this year. Also in Guanajuato, arrest of a Santa Rosa de Lima cartel leader sparked wave of violence, leaving nine dead in

Apaseo el Alto municipality. In Tarimoro municipality, unknown gunmen 22 Nov shot dead four family members of local police officer. In central Zacatecas department, unknown gunmen 24 Nov shot dead National Guard coordinator José Silvestre Urzúa in Pinos municipality. In eastern Veracruz state, unknown assailants 22 Nov killed journalist Pedro Pablo Kumul in regional capital Xalapa. In central Tamaulipas state, shoot-out following arrest of criminal leader 28 Nov prompted schools and public transport to shut down. In central Jalisco state, unknown gunmen 29 Nov shot dead two civilians in their home in Tlajomulco de Zúñiga municipality.

Govt efforts to deepen militarisation of public security faced headwinds. Senate 9 Nov approved constitutional reform allowing armed forces to continue performing domestic law enforcement duties until 2028, after consent of over 20 state legislatures. Still, govt's efforts to militarise public security stalled after federal judges in Guanajuato city and Mexico City 15 Nov granted provisional suspension against integration of National Guard into ministry of defence, arguing that initiative violates constitution; planned integration had prompted criticism from civil society observers who accused President López Obrador of breaking campaign promise to keep National Guard a civilian institution.

Proposed electoral reforms sparked backlash. López Obrador's proposed electoral reforms, which envisage an overhaul of National Electoral Institute (INE) and reduction in number of legislators in Congress and Senate, prompted thousands 13 Nov to protest in over 16 states amid fears reforms could threaten independence and impartiality of electoral system. Despite these calls, López Obrador sought to advance proposals, with Chamber of Deputies 28 Nov approving reform in first debate. Meanwhile, López Obrador 27 Nov led march in Mexico City in response to opposition protests.

➔ **Nicaragua Authorities continued to consolidate one-party state, holding local elections amid ongoing repression; relations with Russia and China deepened.**

President Ortega secured full control of all municipalities in flawed elections. In another step toward establishing one-party state, authorities 6 Nov held municipal elections without participation of opposition parties and with little citizen engagement. Supreme Electoral Council 14 Nov confirmed victory of ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front in all 153 municipalities and set voter turnout at 57.5%, although independent Urnas Abiertas observatory 7 Nov estimated that 82.7% of voters did not participate. Number of international actors criticised elections. Notably, Chile's President Gabriel Boric 9 Nov criticised lack of freedom and unreliable electoral justice; European Union 15 Nov said polls "can neither be considered democratic or legitimate"; and UN human rights office 17 Nov released report stating elections could not be considered transparent, democratic or legitimate.

Crackdown on civil society and political opponents persisted. Interior ministry 4 Nov shut down 100 NGOs, 10 Nov 100 more and 16 Nov revoked 100 more, bringing total number banned since Dec 2018 to around 2,900. Authorities 22 Nov detained renowned sociologist and govt critic Óscar René Vargas, 24 Nov detained opposition figure Guisella Ortega.

Amid deteriorating relations with regional partners, ties with Russia and China deepened. President Ortega 8 Nov accused Costa Rica of being “a terrorist base”, alluding to persecuted politicians who have requested refuge in country; Costa Rica’s President Rodrigo Chaves next day rejected allegations. Meanwhile, Beijing’s ambassador to Managua 8 Nov announced equipment donations for National Police while China’s top legislator, Li Zhanshu, 16 Nov held talks with president of National Assembly on strengthening bilateral ties. VP Rosario Murillo 15 Nov disclosed transport agreements with Russia, while authorities 25 Nov signed cooperation agreement with Russia on cybersecurity.

Caribbean

➔ Haiti Police regained control of oil terminal amid rising levels of gang violence, humanitarian crisis deepened, and international partners imposed sanctions on gang sponsors.

Police unblocked main oil terminal, but gang violence continued to spread. Govt 3 Nov announced National Police had regained control of Varreux oil terminal, blocked since 12 Sept by G9 gang coalition. Clashes between police and gangs however continued nearby for several days, preventing employees from returning to terminal until 7 Nov. Fuel 12 Nov reached petrol stations, but gangs’ control of key roads leading out of capital Port-au-Prince hindered supply to much of country. Meanwhile, violence continued at high levels. Notably, in Petite-Rivière de l’Artibonite commune – controlled by three allied gangs – unknown assailants 9 Nov killed 15 residents with machetes for their alleged complicity with gangs; suspected 400 Mawozo gang members 14 Nov attacked convoy of commercial vehicles, U.S. embassy vehicles and police in Croix-des-Bouquets commune.

Humanitarian crisis persisted. Gang violence continued to restrict flow of essential goods, intensifying humanitarian crisis. Notably, amid impact of fuel shortages on access to clean water and other basic services, ministry of health 27 Nov reported 1,003 confirmed cases of cholera, 11,889 suspected cases, and 223 deaths as of 26 Nov.

Foreign partners imposed new sanctions, continued discussions on military intervention. In bid to help authorities tackle rising insecurity, U.S. and Canada 4 Nov imposed sanctions on Senate President Joseph Lambert and former Senate President and leader of Ayiti An Aksyon political party Youri Latortue. Justice Minister Berto Dorcé and Interior Minister Liszt Quitel 11 Nov resigned, allegedly after their American visas were revoked. Canada 20 Nov announced sanctions against former President Michel Martelly and two former prime ministers, Laurent Lamothe and Jean-Henry Céant. Meanwhile, U.S. State Dept 8 Nov insisted on need for foreign troops to combat “long-term challenges”; Canadian PM Justin Trudeau 20 Nov said Canada is considering possible role in mission, but stressed need for “consensus across political parties in Haiti” before taking “more significant steps”. Ambassador to U.S. Bocchit Edmond 28 Nov reiterated need for “an international presence to help confront the gangs”.