

GENERAL CONTEXT OF COLOMBIA



September 2024

Area: 1,142,000 km². Bordered to the North by the Caribbean Sea, to the East by Venezuela and Brazil, to the South by Peru and Ecuador, and to the West by Panama and the Pacific Ocean.

Population: 52,215,503 inhabitants according to DANE (2023).

Languages: Spanish (main), and multiple recognised indigenous languages.

Administrative division: 32 departments and the capital district Bogotá with 8,034,649 inhabitants.

Geography: Colombia has a remarkable range of natural resources and is bisected by the Andes mountain range. It is divided into natural regions such as the Amazon, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Eastern Plains.

Economy: Currency: Colombian Peso (COP)
Multidimensional Poverty: 12.1% nationally; 8.3% in cabecera municipalities and 25.1% in populated centres and dispersed rural areas (DANE, 2024).

Political System

Colombia is organised as a republic and divided into three main branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial.

The *Executive Branch*, led by President **Gustavo Petro** since 2022 and Vice-President **Francia Márquez**, includes a 19-member Council of Ministers. The *Legislative Branch* is made up of the Congress, which includes a Senate of 108 senators, 2 of them in special indigenous constituencies, and 6 assigned on the basis of the peace accords and minorities; and a Chamber of Representatives with 172 members, elected in various constituencies.

The *judicial branch* includes the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court of Justice, the Council of State and the Attorney General's Office. Oversight bodies include the Office of the Auditor General, which oversees fiscal management, the Office of the Attorney General, which monitors compliance with laws and administrative acts, and the Office of the Ombudsman, which protects human rights.

International organisations:

Member of: United Nations (UN), Organisation of American States (OAS), Andean Community (CAN), Pacific Alliance, Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) as an associate member, World Trade Organisation (WTO), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), among others.

Recent history and persistence of conflicts in Colombia

Colombia's recent history is characterised by decades of internal armed conflict and the signing of peace agreements, with the 2016 agreement standing out as one of the most important. However, implementation faces many challenges due to the complexity of the context. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in its 2022 report, classifies the situation in Colombia into seven types of existing internal armed conflicts:

Conflicts between the state and organised armed groups: Clashes between government forces and armed groups in the wider national territory.

Conflicts between different organised armed groups: Disputes between dissident groups such as the EMC and the Segunda Marquetalia. The National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrilla group and the paramilitary heir structure known as the Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC) or Gulf Clan.

Conflicts between organised armed groups and communities: Clashes with local communities over territorial control or resources leading to forced displacement and

internment of the civilian population. They also involve **child recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping and disappearance.**

Violence associated with drug trafficking: Activities related to the control and trafficking of drugs that produce serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Urban criminal violence: Conflict in urban areas, often associated with gangs and organised crime.

Political violence: Persecution of social and political leaders.

Illegal mining-related violence: Conflicts over the illegal exploitation of mineral resources.

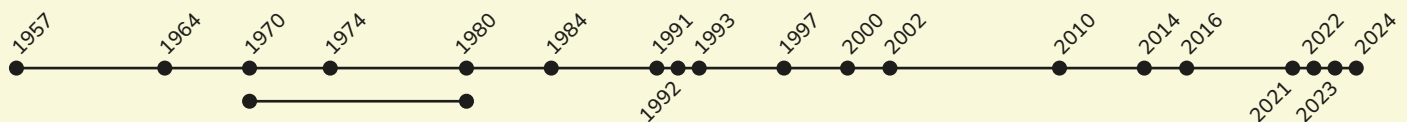
To address this complexity, the current government is promoting the "Total Peace" policy, which seeks to extend peace-building efforts with all these conflict actors. Negotiations with these different groups are slow and can lead to institutional attrition, as well as deteriorating security conditions in the territories.

EU-Colombia Relations

- The EU is Colombia's second largest trading partner. The main export products are coal (37%), bananas (17%), coffee (11%), oil (7%), and palm oil (5%). Since 2013 there has been a trade agreement between the EU-Colombia and Peru, which Ecuador also joined in 2017.
- There is political dialogue on human rights between the EU and Colombia that takes place twice a year.
- The EU has supported the implementation of the peace agreement with the FARC-EP through the Colombia Peace Trust Fund.
- The EU has appointed Adrianus Koetsenruijter as its new Special Envoy for Peace.
- Colombia has a European Union Delegation in Bogotá and its functions include following up on the due diligence directive approved in June 2024.

Given the trade relationship between Colombia and the European Union, as well as the worrying human rights situation in Colombia, we ask the EU institutions and member states to include Colombia in their agendas.

Timeline of Conflict in Colombia



- 1957: Establishment of the National Front:** Liberals and conservatives share power until 1974, excluding other political movements and generating armed opposition.
- 1964: Operation Marquetalia:** The army and peasants clash in Tolima, the founding moment of the FARC. The ELN was also created in that year, and 3 years later the EPL.
- 1970-1980: Expansion of drug trafficking:** strengthening of right-wing paramilitary militias.
- 1974: Creation of the M-19:** The guerrilla group Movimiento 19 de abril (demobilised in 1990) emerges.
- 1984: La Uribe Accords:** Agreement signed between the FARC-EP and the government.
- 1991: Creation of the Ombudsman's Office:** Protection of human rights in Colombia.
- 1992: The National Women's Network (Red Nacional de Mujeres) is born:** a feminist commitment to the full realisation of women's human rights, which was followed by other feminist organisations
- 1993: Death of Pablo Escobar:** Reconfiguration of cartels in support of paramilitary militias.
- 1997: Creation of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC):** Grouping of paramilitary groups and intensification of the conflict.
- 2000: Launch of Plan Colombia:** promoted by the United States for the fight against drug trafficking and the war against guerrillas. **Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325:** focuses on women's participation in peacebuilding and security.
- 2002: Presidency of Álvaro Uribe:** Militarist security policy in response to the armed conflict.
- 2010: Presidency of Juan Manuel Santos:** Re-elected in 2014.
- 2014: Inclusion of the Gender Approach in the Peace Process:** Gender sub-commission established in the peace negotiations.
- 2016: Signing of the Peace Agreement:** between the government and the FARC-EP in Havana. **Decree 1314 of 2016:** for the creation of the Comprehensive Programme of **Guarantees for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders.**
- 2021: National Strike:** Protests against a tax reform that spread to other social demands. State violence during demonstrations.
- 2022: Gustavo Petro's presidency:** First time the left comes to power. **Vice President Francia Márquez:** Afro-descendant woman, environmentalist and feminist, is a symbol of change in government. **Implementation of Total Peace:** Programme to dismantle multiple illegal armed groups. **Negotiations with ELN:** Announcement from Caracas on the resumption of negotiations. **Article 342 of Colombia's National Development Plan 2022-2026 (PND)** declares a national emergency due to gender-based violence. **National Action Plan (NAP)** to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325, integrating the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- 2023: Mexico Accord:** ELN and government sign peace agreement. **Cuba Agreements:** Steps towards a bilateral national and temporary ceasefire. **Presentation of the CNP:** Beginning of the ceasefire with civil society and ethnic peoples. **Reopening of dialogue tables:** Between the government of Gustavo Petro and the ELN.
- 2024: Difficulties in negotiations with EMC FARC-EP:** Since the assassination of indigenous activist Carmelina Yule Paví.