

## How Petro Broken Colombia

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With just over a month until the presidential elections and only four months left in his term, President Petro is facing strong criticism from national and international actors, as well as from within his own government<sup>1</sup>.

Critics argue that his administration has weakened the country economically<sup>2</sup>, financially<sup>3</sup>, politically<sup>4</sup>, diplomatic<sup>5</sup>, and territorially<sup>6</sup> - *undermining the very foundation of the social state under the rule of law*. His record on human rights - "denying access to healthcare, for example<sup>7</sup>- and international humanitarian law, they contend, reflects disorder, racism, rising violence, systematic attacks to the press<sup>8</sup>, hunger, poverty, and a persistent disregard for human life—particularly affecting children, adolescents, and women<sup>9</sup>.

Political violence has become a defining feature of his administration<sup>10</sup>. According to critics, millions of U.S. dollars have been spent on influencers and media outlets, both domestic and international, while criminal groups have allegedly been favored in efforts to attack political opposition and civil society<sup>11</sup>.

More than \$3.5 million has been spent on extensive foreign travel to promote a vision of Colombia<sup>12</sup> that largely exists in the president's imagination—one he continues to deny even as the country faces its deepest crisis in two decades, surpassing the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One area, however, stands out as a clear success—at least for illegal armed groups and organized crime. These actors have benefited significantly from what critics describe as the "La Picota prison deal" during the 2022 presidential campaign, later reflected in the "Total Peace" policy. According to these accounts, President Petro offered incentives such as reduced accountability, greater operational freedom, and tolerance of territorial control in exchange for political and economic support.

As a result, critics argue, criminal organizations are now *richer, stronger, and in control of more territory* than before 2022. In some cases, they are effectively co-governing alongside the state<sup>13</sup>. During the March 8, 2026, legislative elections, these groups allegedly mobilized at least 2.4 million of the 4.5 million votes obtained by Petro's party across 124 verified municipalities<sup>14</sup>.

It is further estimated that such organizations exercise control over at least 300 municipalities and influence up to 70 percent of the national territory. For these actors, the policy has been a clear success—and, according to detractors, the president has largely delivered on those expectations.

International and regional organizations, along with national and international NGOs and think tanks, have recently published reports documenting Colombia's severe human rights and humanitarian crisis—one that may be the worst in nearly two decades.

<sup>1</sup>Petro's scandals are endless. The latest involves former Presidential General Secretary, Angie Rodríguez, who is still part of the administration. She described Petro's government as engaging in "*fast-minute corruption, or exit corruption*"—corrupt systematic acts carried out at the end of a term in office. *Blu radio*, 22 April 2026.

<sup>2</sup> National debt amount to 39, 6 billion COP, *El Tiempo*, 21 April 2026. The health system is broke.

<sup>3</sup> Attack to the National Bank Directors, targeting women: <https://www.eluniversal.com.co/colombia/2026/04/23/petro-arremete-contr-el-banco-de-la-republica-debate-por-tasas-de-interes/>; The government took on debt at interest rates that are double those of the IMF favoring friends, *El Tiempo*, 23 April 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Through his X account Petro has violently attack his political opponents targeting women journalists and politicians even using fake video, *El Espectador*, 22 April 2026.

<sup>5</sup> Diplomacy has been used to attack democracies and support authoritarian regimes such Iran (Hezbollah), Gaza (Hamas), Russia and their allies such as Spain. Also, the main core has been finding refugee status to criminal tied to Gustavo Petro's inner circle: Tren de Aragua chief in Colombia, Papá Pitufo and Carlos Ramón Gonzales, Green Alliance boss, *El Espectador*, April 22, 2026.

<sup>6</sup> Controlled by illegal armed groups and organized crime, *El Tiempo*, April 22, 2026, p. 1.2.

<sup>7</sup> 20260218 Colombia 253 Children Have Died Due to Lack of Medicines, [www.360geopolitica.org](http://www.360geopolitica.org)

<sup>8</sup> Interamerican Commission for Human Rights, The IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, 24.04.2026.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Ombudsperson of Colombia, UNOHCHR, ICG, Amnesty International reports published in 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Petro's personal, party and fanatic attacks culminated with the assassination of Senator and Presidential candidate Miguel Uribe by one of Petro's peace facilitator.

<sup>11</sup> "Alias "El Zarco" was appointed as a peace facilitator by Gustavo Petro, a status that allowed him to move more freely around Colombia; according to an accomplice, he ordered and financed the assassination of Senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay. After he fled to Venezuela, that status was revoked.

<sup>12</sup> The figure does not account for the trips abroad that Gustavo Petro has taken without congressional authorization, nor for the international travel undertaken by Vice President Francia Márquez; including these could easily add another \$1 million in spending.

<sup>13</sup> 20260130 Colombia Narco-Democratic Turn, [www.360geopolitica.org](http://www.360geopolitica.org)

<sup>14</sup> *Votes from the war?* In 126 municipalities analyzed, within the framework of "Total Peace," the Pacto Histórico obtained 2,400,000 votes. *Semana*, 18 April 2026, pp. 38-39.

These reports present alarming figures on mass killings, environmental destruction, child recruitment, territorial control, political violence, and violence targeting children, adolescents, and women. However, they may still fall short of capturing the full extent of the situation.

Several factors suggest that these figures are likely underestimates. *First*, many international and national organizations, think tanks and NGOs lack access to large portions of the national territory. *Second*, in numerous regions, communities are afraid to report abuses due to fear of reprisals<sup>15</sup>. *Third*, some national and international NGOs, Think Tanks maintain close ties to the current government; in certain cases, their leadership has been influenced by political appointments, with some directors later serving as ambassadors or consular officials.

*Taken together, these constraints imply that figures should be interpreted with caution.*

For instance, when reports indicate that 1.5 million people have been victims of violence, the true number may be significantly higher—potentially even double.

Similarly, if a report cites 90,000 victims of displacement, 235,000 cases of confinement, and 360,000 children and adolescents affected, these figures may understate the real impact.

In some cases, doubling these estimates could constitute a rough adjustment to better approximate the scale of the crisis. At the same time, while a reported 172 cases of child recruitment in 2025 may be closer to 400<sup>16</sup>.

Furthermore, the approximately 27,000 members of illegal armed groups and organized crime networks linked to the “Total Peace” government process continue to obscure any

accurate assessment of Colombia's already dire human rights situation.

Their territorial control and coercive power restrict access, silence victims, and distort available data<sup>17</sup>. Critics argue that the Petro administration is fully aware of this dynamic.

At the same time, political violence, corruption, and attacks against children, adolescents, and women—particularly women in politics and journalism—have been systematically underreported or dismissed<sup>18</sup>.

According to critics, this pattern of denial has been reinforced by sectors aligned with the government, including members of the Historic Pact party, government influencers, and certain NGOs—particularly some within indigenous communities—that have received substantial public funding since 2022<sup>19</sup>.

However, it is important to recognize that several critical reports tend to emerge *at least* a few months before Petro's mandate ends, even if they do not yet fully capture the reality on the ground.

The international community—including states [authoritarians and some European] and multilateral organizations—has invested millions of U.S. dollars, both within Colombia and abroad, in efforts that portray a declining government as democratic.

Critics argue that this support is tied to strategic and economic interests, including contracts in sectors such as aviation, oil, gas, and passport production<sup>20</sup>, as well as the repayment of a significant share of international loans acquired under Petro's administration at scandalous high rates.

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<sup>15</sup> The IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression has warned that armed groups involved in Petro's “Total Peace” negotiations are threatening journalists and media outlets, restricting their ability to report on conditions in Colombia's regions, report, La Silla vacía, 24.04.2026.

<sup>16</sup> See Amnesty International's latest report on Colombia for an overview of the human rights situation. Statistics and analysis are provided in *El Tiempo*, April 22, 2026, p. 1.2.

<sup>17</sup> See IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, La Silla vacía, 24.04.2026.

<sup>18</sup> See IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, La Silla vacía, 24.04.2026.

<sup>19</sup> *El Espectador*, 18.03.2026, pp. 2 and 5.

<sup>20</sup> <https://cambiocolombia.com/poder/articulo/2026/4/pasaportes-mentiras-gustavo-petro-imprenta-nacional-procuraduria/> The lies of Petro's government.