

Petro the Predator: Mass Killings and Environmental Devastation in Colombia

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Petro's Career and Presidency: Sponsorship and Financing

According to former Venezuelan intelligence chief Hugo "El Pollo" Carvajal, President Gustavo Petro's political trajectory has received financial backing from the governments of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro since 2000. Variations of this claim have resurfaced over the past two decades in judicial proceedings and media reports, occasionally echoed in statements attributed to Venezuelan officials¹.

Controversy also surrounds the financing of Petro's 2022 presidential campaign. Investigations and reporting have pointed to potential irregularities, including alleged illicit contributions and breaches of legal spending limits². Colombian electoral authorities have already sanctioned members of the campaign team for exceeding financing caps, intensifying scrutiny over its funding structure.

Testimonies and materials attributed to individuals linked to armed groups and organized crime—including FARC dissident commander Néstor Vera (alias Iván Mordisco)³, Diego Marín Buitrago (alias "Papá Pitufo," a major smuggler)⁴, Andrés Felipe Marín Silva (alias "Pipe Tuluá," linked to the Immaculate Cartel)⁵, and Alexander Díaz Mendoza (alias Calarcá)⁶, among others, claim that they contributed money to Petro's 2022 campaign.

The controversy deepened when Nicolás Petro, the president's son, acknowledged receiving money from businessmen and individuals linked to narco-trafficking, stating that part of those funds got to his father's campaign⁷. Separately, international scrutiny has emerged, with U.S. prosecutors reportedly examining possible links between drug traffickers and campaign financing, though no charges have been filed and Petro denies all wrongdoing.

Questions about campaign funding are not new. During Petro's mayoral run in Bogotá, a widely circulated video showed him receiving cash in plastic bags. While the origin and legality of those funds were never conclusively established, the episode continues to raise concerns.

Finally, some figures tied to past financing scandals have left Colombia for Europe, in some cases under government protection—echoing patterns in newer investigations.

The Most Corrupt Administration Ever

Since taking office, President Petro's administration has faced intense scrutiny over corruption and transparency, with three controversies dominating debate: the UNGRD scandal, the

Inviás scandal, and a 2026 surge in temporary service contracts—often dubbed a "parallel administration."

The UNGRD scandal involves allegedly inflated emergency contracts that diverted disaster funds with little oversight.

A related Inviás case accuses former ministers Ricardo Bonilla and Luis Fernando Velasco of steering contracts across both agencies, with programs like "Caminos Comunitarios para la Paz Total" under fire for weak documentation, no competitive bidding, and potential large-scale mismanagement—now extending to Congress⁸.

In 2026, concerns rose over a surge in temporary service contracts—about 7,000 new positions and sharply higher spending. Critics call it a politically driven "parallel administration" that sidesteps merit-based hiring, while the government says it's needed for execution and efficiency.

Concerns have also been raised about the travel of President Petro and Vice President Márquez. Reports cite nearly 130 international trips—often with delegations of 30+—costing millions USD. Critics question transparency, citing unclear agendas, limited disclosure of attendees, and instances where scheduled meetings reportedly didn't occur.

At the same time, repeated clashes with oversight bodies, opposition sectors, and established institutional norms have raised concerns about respect for the constitutional order, judicial independence, and political pluralism. Notably, Gustavo Petro has, on multiple occasions, been described as overstepping functions assigned to other state institutions, including the Attorney General's Office of Colombia⁹, reinforcing a broader pattern of strained interbranch relations and legal uncertainty.

Petro's main targets children, youth, young adults and women

Under President Petro's administration, reports indicate that at least 254 children in Colombia have died amid delays or lack of access to essential medicines. Among the most cited cases is Kevin Acosta, a 7-year-old with hemophilia, who died after failing to receive timely treatment¹⁰.

Equally alarming are ongoing concerns about minors in territories controlled by armed groups and organized crime tied to Petro's "Total Peace" policy. Reports indicate that children and adolescents face forced recruitment, sexual exploitation, and use in criminal operations.

Groups such as the ELN, FARC dissidents, and the Gulf Clan have been accused of systematically involving minors in their

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq5TDv3NL7w>

² Confirmed by the National Elections Council despite that Petro and his party put pressure under several members, and one was push out of the NEC.

³ In March 2024, a video circulating from *Noticias Caracol* showed Iván Mordisco responding angrily to President Gustavo Petro's criticism, saying (roughly) "when we supported him in the campaign, we weren't traffickers." That video was published around 21 March 2024.

⁴ According to the investigations revealed by *Noticias Caracol*, the meetings between Jorge Lemus (then director of the National Intelligence Directorate - DNI) and Luis Felipe Ramírez, lawyer of alias "Papá Pitufo" (Diego Marín), took place at the beginning of 2025. In Petro's name, Lemus offered legal benefits to Pitufo -possible peace facilitator.

⁵ "Pipe Tuluá" (Andrés Felipe Marín Silva) stated in a recording that he allegedly financed President Gustavo Petro's 2022 presidential campaign with illicit funds, supposedly through the president's brother, Juan Fernando Petro. According to the released audio, Marín said he has "videos, audios, and deposits" that would prove these contributions and that he is willing to present them before the courts in the United States.

⁶ The Attorney General's Office of Colombia confirmed the authenticity and accuracy of the documents and files seized from the computers and devices of alias Calarcá, which indicate that money was allegedly given to Petro's presidential campaign through today's Vice President, Francia Márquez.

⁷ In an interview and in testimony before the Colombian Attorney General's Office in August 2023, Nicolás Petro Burgos – the son of President Gustavo Petro – stated that part of the money he and others received from individuals with alleged ties to drug trafficking was used in his father's 2022 presidential campaign. He indicated that some of those funds were applied to the campaign and others stayed with him personally.

⁸ Enviás file, *Semana*, March 28, pp. 10-14.

⁹ Petro ally and former NID director Lemus reportedly negotiated with "Papá Pitufo" (now under Portugal's protection), tied to financing Gustavo Petro's 2022 campaign. In exchange, he would be allowed to return to Colombia as a "peace facilitator," echoing cases like "El Zarco"—a move critics argue seeks to secure his silence and encroaches on powers reserved exclusively for the Attorney General's Office of Colombia.

¹⁰ Kevin Acosta, the Colombian boy who died while waiting for medication for hemophilia (and the outrage sparked by the government's response), BBC, February 8, 2026 (updated February 18, 2026)

activities—including recruitment at ages as young as 10, sexual abuse, and the use of children as human shields¹¹.

Additional allegations point to the targeting of adolescents and young adults in efforts to influence public—and in some cases private—universities, with claims that these groups play a role in their organization and ideological training¹².

Critics argue the government downplays the crisis by framing affected youth mainly as poor rather than confronting the criminal networks exploiting them—an approach they say enables those networks to grow, compounded by silence from figures like Iván Cepeda and the Pacto Histórico party.

Criminal Power Expands Under “Total Peace” Strategy

The expansion of illegal economies has been striking. Illegal gold mining alone generates an estimated \$8.4-\$9 billion annually, alongside revenues from drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking.

Over the same period, membership in criminal organizations has nearly doubled—from about 13,000 to 27,000—enabling these groups to consolidate parallel systems of control in areas with limited state presence¹³.

The growth of these networks has fueled violence and extended their political influence, reportedly giving Petro-aligned candidates a serious advantage. Links to the Pacto Histórico and figures like Iván Cepeda raise governance concerns.

In the March 8 legislative elections, at least 300 municipalities dominated by criminal groups allegedly gave the party 100% of the vote amid voter pressure¹⁴.

Humanitarian Crisis and Territorial Control

In regions like Chocó, the ELN and Clan del Golfo aggressively exploit Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, restricting movement and access to basic services. Reports detail widespread abuses, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors along key corridors like Medellín-Quibdó and Pereira-Quibdó¹⁵.

Similar crises persist in Buenaventura, Catatumbo, and the departments of Arauca, Guainía, Vichada, Amazonas, Cauca, Nariño, and Putumayo, where children—some as young as ten—are forcibly recruited, denied protection, and excluded from basic services. Oversight bodies describe these abuses as part of a deep-rooted system of violence, made more alarming by the inaction of Petro's government.

A reluctance to challenge criminal actors—combined with the political alignment of affected communities—has produced a dangerous paralysis. Urgency is met with silence, leaving Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and vulnerable populations trapped between criminal expansion and state neglect¹⁶.

These dynamics are not new but reflect deep historical continuities. Colombia's armed conflict has long been marked by systematic human rights violations. Between 1971 and 2016, the FARC-EP recruited and abused at least 18,677 children, with documented patterns of sexual violence and forced abortions¹⁷.

Transitional justice has advanced accountability in some areas, but gaps remain, especially for gender-based crimes. Critics warn that restorative approaches risk leaving victims without full truth or reparations. Political controversies, including the alleged “Pacto de la Picota,”¹⁸ fuel perceptions of blurred lines between state authority and criminal influence.

A core element of “Total Peace” is using government-recognized facilitators to negotiate with armed groups. Critics warn that appointing individuals with serious criminal backgrounds effectively lets them continue illegal activities—from trafficking and kidnapping to recruiting minors and exploiting resources.

Under Petro, these groups have expanded in manpower and financial resources, becoming key allies for his party in both legislative and presidential elections.

Escalating Violence and Evolving Tactics

Since President Petro took office, violence in Colombia has become more complex, with growing use of drones and explosives against military, police, and civilians.

Displacement, massacres¹⁹, and forced recruitment—especially of minors—remain widespread, with reports of increasing child exploitation. In several regions (at least 70% of the territory), civilians are killed, human rights defenders targeted, and basic services severely limited²⁰.

Beyond corruption, *political violence* has surged, peaking with the assassination of senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay, linked to FARC dissidents Segunda Marquetalia.

Investigations and testimonies have linked figures such as Iván Márquez and alias “Zarco Aldinever” to the chain of command. Aldinever, a former government-recognized peace facilitator with nationwide mobility, ordered the assassination of the senator and presidential candidate before fleeing toward the Venezuelan border. He is also cited, along with Simeón Pérez Marroquín (“El Viejo”), as part of the network that coordinated the crime.

The political climate was further fueled by confrontational rhetoric from figures like Petro and Iván Cepeda. Critics argue that this polarization, combined with the “Total Peace” policy granting recognition and leeway to criminal groups, created conditions that made such violence more likely, even as direct criminal responsibility remains under judicial review²¹.

From this perspective, some critics hold Petro and Cepeda politically responsible, arguing that policies allowing criminal group members to move freely under peace frameworks helped

¹¹ See www.360geopolitica.org reports on children.

¹² In a *Semana* investigation published on December 20, 2025, the magazine reported that authorities had accessed case files, interviews, and recordings showing that a radical group involved in the violent episodes tied to the *estallido social* in Bogotá had hierarchical organization, training, and financing with apparent links to armed actors ideologically aligned with the ELN – including recruitment on university campuses and organized operational structures embedded within protests

¹³ The Total Peace policy failed, *Semana*, April 12, pp. 10-14.

¹⁴ Combined with vote-buying practices and transhumant electoral strategies, this could represent at least one million votes nationwide.

¹⁵ Children Sold for Defloration in Colombia, www.360geopolitica.org

¹⁶ They received important contracts to stay silence and support Petro's government.

¹⁷ FARC EP 18,677 children recruited, raped, abused www.360geopolitica.org

¹⁸ Petro's brother reportedly offered criminal groups immunity, territorial control, and business-as-usual arrangements in exchange for political support.

¹⁹ Massacres have dramatically increased since 2024 and almost double in the first trimester of 2026, Ombudsperson Office, INDEPAZ, 2026.

²⁰ UNICEF, recruitment increased 300%.

²¹ Segunda Marquetalia ordered the killing of Miguel, *Semana*, March 21, pp. 10-14.

create conditions for the attack. Alleged historical ties between these figures and Iván Márquez remain a matter of ongoing debate.

Critics say the government initially portrayed the assassination as an isolated act by a financially desperate minor, but evidence shows a coordinated operation involving over \$300,000 and multiple participants, directed by “Zarco Aldinever” and Iván Márquez according to the logistic operator alias el Viejo.

They note that Aldinever's peace-facilitator status was revoked only 40 days later—time critics say was enough for him to flee—and question earlier Defense Ministry claims of his death²², which were never backed by conclusive public evidence.

Environmental Devastation and Resource Capture

Parallel to Colombia's security crisis is a deepening environmental emergency driven largely by illegal economies. Criminal organizations embedded in illegal gold mining continue to devastate forests, rivers, and ecosystems while consolidating territorial control.

Mercury contamination is especially severe, with large quantities entering waterways each year. This pollution bioaccumulates in fish and humans, increasing long-term risks such as neurological damage and developmental disorders. At the same time, sedimentation and river alteration degrade aquatic ecosystems, undermining food security and the livelihoods of riverine communities.

Deforestation remains acute. Despite reported short-term declines in 2023, mining infrastructure continues to open remote areas to logging, land grabbing, and agricultural expansion. Key biodiversity regions such as the Amazon and Chocó are increasingly fragmented, weakening ecosystem resilience and reducing Colombia's capacity for climate regulation.

Illegal coca cultivation further compounds environmental harm through soil degradation, chemical runoff, and water contamination, reinforcing a broader pattern of ecological extraction tied to armed control of territory.

Critics argue that environmental governance has been inconsistent: while legal extractive activities face tighter restrictions, enforcement against illegal exploitation remains weak, allowing criminal networks to expand and entrench themselves.

In this context, they contend that state policy gaps have strengthened illegal armed groups and criminal economies—actors that not only drive environmental destruction, but also fuel violence, displacement, and exploitation in vulnerable communities.

Narratives, Data, and International Perception

Debates over measurement and perception have further polarized analysis. Critics argue that key indicators—such as coca cultivation, violence levels, and economic performance—have been unilaterally modified by the government to present a more favorable narrative.

International organizations, including the United Nations, European Union, and Organization of American States, faced

scrutiny for relying on such official data, raising concerns about gaps between reported progress and realities on the ground.

Some analysts also warn that international discourse has, for almost 25 years, romanticized and politicized criminal groups such as FARC EP, ELN and now FARC dissidents, the Gulf Clan obscuring ongoing abuses and environmental destruction.

Since President Petro took office, several European countries—both within and outside the EU—have defended his government in international forums such as the UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States.

At the same time, these governments have secured—or are seeking—lucrative contracts with his administration in sectors ranging from gas and aviation to passports and coffee, while creating the illusion of successful cocaine seizures.

This dual posture raises serious concerns. It suggests a transactional dynamic in which political backing is closely tied to economic and strategic gains, with human rights and accountability taking a backseat.

For many Colombians, this mirrors a broader global pattern, where lives and rights of populations—like Iranians, Ukrainians, Palestinians, Venezuelans—are treated as negotiable, subordinated to the interests of governments and corporations.

Such trade-offs demand urgent scrutiny. When international actors appear willing to overlook serious concerns in exchange for contracts or strategic cooperation, they erode the credibility of the democratic values and human rights they claim to defend.

Conclusions

President Gustavo Petro polices, his political party, and his main presidential candidate Iván Cepeda are driving widespread killings and environmental devastation nationwide through associates involved in the “Total Peace” strategy - illegal armed groups and organized crime.

They are accused of fueling violence, expanding illegal economies that damage ecosystems, and deepening the exploitation and displacement of vulnerable communities. Children are especially target, facing forced recruitment, sexual violence, and limited access to basic services.

During the past 25 years, international actors—including Iran (Hezbollah/Hamas), Russia, and some European states—have heavily invested millions of dollars in the political legitimization of criminal organizations such as the FARC-EP, FARC dissidents, and the ELN among other illegal organizations.

Since Petro is in power, such actors - mainly European states—have financed films, books, conferences, and exhibitions portraying these groups more sympathetically, and have also engaged in diplomatic outreach and public recognition of political figures linked to them and President Petro.

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²² “The Minister of Defense, Pedro Sánchez, stated on August 11, 2025, that the individual known as ‘Zarco Aldinever,’ a leader of the Segunda Marquetalia, had been killed by the ELN in Venezuela.