

Petro-Cepeda Legacy: Death, Pillage and Criminal Rise
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The Gustavo Petro administration (2022-2026) systematically transitioned state apparatuses to facilitate transnational organized crime, securing a territorial and electoral stronghold under the guise of "Total Peace". Operating from an illegitimate mandate backed by criminal funding and the Picota Pact—according to Petro's brother and elder son, the regime's defining policy was the aggressive expansion of crime syndicates and violence across Colombia and the hemisphere.

Institutional corruption was Petro core mechanism of governance, highlighted by major scandals—such as the massive misappropriation of public funds through the National Disaster Risk Management Unit (UNGRD) to buy congressional votes, alongside illegal campaign financing revelations exposing millions in undeclared and illicit funds. Rather than curbing graft, the administration weaponized state resources to secure political compliance.

To achieve this state capture, the Petro's administration compromised state intelligence, paralyzed the military, and abandoned entire communities to the absolute control of criminal organizations. Today, these syndicates exercise direct dominance over 45% of Colombia and exert functional influence across 70% of the national territory.

The Petro - Iván Cepeda (senator) movement Pact Historic leverages this brutal territorial dominion to engineer a captive electorate, targeting a baseline of 4 million coerced votes for the 2026 elections. Under this co-government, Colombia's illicit economies have reached unprecedented heights.

The country currently ranks number one globally in cocaine production and trafficking, while sitting in the top five worldwide for illegal mining, rampant deforestation, and the trafficking of children and women. This ecological and humanitarian devastation is aggressively masked by millions of dollars in international public relations campaigns that falsely market Petro as an environmental champion.

Despite its stated commitment to social justice and human rights, Petro's government has faced sustained criticism for failing to protect women and children. Gender-based violence, forced displacement, child recruitment by illegal armed groups, sexual exploitation of minors, and attacks against women remain widespread across Colombia.

Commentators argue that the Petro's administration's security and social policies failed to protect these vulnerable populations. They contend that the territorial expansion of criminal organizations and illegal armed groups under the "Total Peace" framework increased exposure to violence, coercion, recruitment, and exploitation, while the government prioritized political agreements and ideological objectives over citizen security only to secure political support from such criminal organizations.

Analysts further argue that these dynamics are reinforced by an international advocacy network they describe as a sophisticated propaganda apparatus. They claim that a broad coalition of left-leaning NGOs dominates the human rights narrative and, by leveraging the credibility of respected humanitarian institutions and awards, shapes international perceptions in ways that influence organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Inter-American human rights system.

Consequently, geopolitical interests and financial incentives allow influential international actors to overlook what critics describe as the regime's complicity in high-profile political violence. They point to Senator Iván Cepeda's characterization of the assassination of Senator and presidential candidate Miguel Uribe Turbay as a mere "war casualty"—a remarkable assessment given his internationally recognized *distinctions* in International Humanitarian Law.

For the 2026-2030 legislative term, the Historic Pact coalition consolidated a unified 54-seat bloc in the Colombian Congress under the banner of progressivism. This bloc brings together the Historic Pact and its "Total Peace" partners, including illegal armed groups and organized criminal organizations. These groups are alleged to have helped secure an estimated four million votes through coercion and intimidation—a practice in Colombia commonly referred to as *voto pistola* ("vote at gunpoint").

The alliance's primary political objective is widely seen as preserving and expanding the legacy of the Petro-Iván Cepeda political project. Analysts argue that this legacy is defined by corruption, record levels of cocaine production, expanding illegal mining, accelerating deforestation, human trafficking, escalating political violence, increasing violence against women and children, political intimidation, more than 32,000 people killed, and the growing influence of organized criminal organizations across Colombia, Venezuela, and the broader region during the 2022-2026 period.

If, as many observers contend, the alliance's central political project under the leadership of former President Gustavo Petro and Senator Iván Cepeda is to preserve and extend the Petro administration's legacy, can it credibly present itself as a democratic alternative? This question becomes even more pressing in light of Petro's calls for Indigenous communities, peasants, and sectors of civil society to organize nationwide militias and take up arms—statements that fueled concerns about the promotion of paramilitary-style structures.

According to its observers, the legacy of Gustavo Petro and Iván Cepeda has left Colombia weakened across multiple fronts: entrenched political violence against the opposition and human rights defenders; rising violence against women and children; severe environmental degradation driven by the predatory exploitation of natural resources; a fiscal deficit of 7.8% of GDP; and the empowerment of criminal organizations whose expanding territorial control has further eroded the rule of law.

Appraisers argue that the Petro-Cepeda alliance with criminal syndicates has poured millions into sophisticated international public relations campaigns aimed at sanitizing its political project and reshaping global opinion.

They contend these efforts recast powerful criminal organizations as marginalized communities or desperate job seekers—portraying the Gulf Clan as impoverished Caribbean fishing families and the Tren de Aragua as young migrants pursuing opportunity—while downplaying allegations of their involvement in drug trafficking, extortion, territorial control, and systematic assassinations and violence. Petro, Cepeda, and their Historic Pact movement did not undermine Colombia alone.

The international community—particularly several European governments—played a significant role in legitimizing, protecting, and reinforcing Petro's administration. Venezuela, Iran, and, through their respective diplomatic and political networks, actors associated with Hezbollah and Hamas, alongside Sweden, Portugal, Spain, and other European countries, used their diplomatic influence to build an international shield around Petro's government.

In parallel, multimillion-dollar contracts were negotiated and awarded under circumstances that deserve far greater scrutiny. Despite concerns surrounding the nature and conditions of some of these agreements, foreign governments and institutions reportedly secured substantial penalties and contractual protections in the event that a future, a transparent Colombian government sought to terminate or renegotiate them.

This raises a fundamental question: when diplomatic support and major commercial interests become intertwined, where does legitimate international cooperation end—and political protection begin? Colombia's future governments should have the freedom

to review questionable contracts, hold officials accountable, and act in the national interest without being constrained by agreements designed to make change prohibitively expensive.

Major criminal organizations such as the Gulf Clan, the ELN, FARC dissident groups, and the Tren de Aragua have repeatedly been portrayed by parts of the international community primarily as collections of impoverished people, vulnerable youth, or victims of social circumstances. This framing obscures a far more disturbing reality: these are among the most powerful and sophisticated criminal organizations operating in the Americas, with enormous financial resources, territorial control, weapons, and the capacity to inflict systematic violence on civilian populations.

Millions of dollars have been invested by the United Nations Secretariat and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in policies, programs, and advocacy that have contributed to this distorted narrative. The consequences are not merely rhetorical. When criminal organizations are predominantly framed through the lens of poverty and victimhood, the suffering of the civilians who live under their control can become secondary to the political and humanitarian narratives constructed around the perpetrators themselves.

The same concern applies to international figures and institutions that have defended or legitimized political regimes and armed or criminal actors while presenting their conduct primarily through humanitarian or political explanations. Prof. Ben Saul, under the framework of UN human-rights mandates, has been involved in positions concerning the legitimacy of Maduro's government, while Fabrizio Hochschild has faced criticism over approaches to armed and criminal actors in the Caribbean and Colombia. These cases raise serious questions about whether international advocacy mechanisms are being applied consistently and impartially.

The central issue is simple: whose human rights are being defended? Colombian civilians who are murdered, displaced, extorted, recruited, or terrorized by criminal organizations cannot become an afterthought in international policy. Human rights must protect victims regardless of their political relevance, wealth, or access to international advocates. A system in which those with money, political influence, or sophisticated international representation receive greater attention than ordinary civilians is not a credible human-rights system.

International institutions should be judged not by the sophistication of their rhetoric, but by whether their policies actually protect the people who have the least power to protect themselves.

Since August 7, the Historic Pact and some of its former associates—including individuals and groups linked to illegal armed organizations and organized crime—have faced serious allegations of contributing to or enabling attacks against the Colombian population.

In urban protests, public buildings and transportation infrastructure have been destroyed, while in Colombia's territories, human rights defenders, police officers, and members of the military have been killed. Entire communities have been subjected to threats, intimidation, confinement, and prolonged periods in which people have been unable to leave their homes safely.

What is equally troubling is the silence of much of the international community. European governments and United Nations institutions, in particular, appear far more willing to condemn abuses when they fit a particular political narrative than when the victims are Colombian civilians, members of the security forces, or communities threatened by armed and criminal organizations.

This raises a fundamental question about the credibility and impartiality of international human-rights institutions: Are they

applying universal human-rights standards, or are political considerations determining whose suffering deserves attention?

Human rights cannot be selective. International law and human-rights conventions do not distinguish between victims according to their political affiliation, ideology, or social status. If international institutions remain silent when Colombian civilians are threatened, displaced, killed, or deprived of their basic freedoms, they risk abandoning the very principles they claim to defend.

The Colombian people deserve more than political solidarity presented as human-rights advocacy. They deserve institutions that are impartial, standards that are applied consistently, and protection that does not depend on who the victims are, who the perpetrators are, or which political narrative happens to prevail.

There is, however, another issue that deserves serious scrutiny. During the Petro administration (2022-2026), European governments and institutions provided substantial international assistance for cultural, academic, and media initiatives in Colombia.

Some of these initiatives—including films, magazines, books, conferences, and other productions—have been criticized for portraying members of illegal armed groups and organized crime through heroic, romanticized, or heavily contextualized narratives that bear little resemblance to the reality experienced by the communities subjected to their violence.

The question is not whether artists, academics, or journalists should be free to tell complex stories. They should. The question is whether publicly funded international assistance should be used to construct narratives that minimize, romanticize, or distort the conduct of organizations responsible for killings, extortion, displacement, recruitment, and terror against civilians.

That question ultimately leads back to democratic accountability. European taxpayers have a legitimate right to know how their governments' international-aid resources are being allocated, what outcomes they are producing, and whether the reports presented to national parliaments accurately reflect conditions on the ground.

When official reports and international narratives diverge sharply from the experience of Colombian communities living under the threat of armed and criminal organizations, parliamentary oversight cannot be treated as a formality. Public money requires public accountability, and human-rights advocacy requires intellectual honesty.

The credibility of European governments and international institutions will not be determined by the narratives they fund, but by whether those narratives withstand scrutiny against the reality faced by the people they claim to assist.

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