

Colombia's Peace Process: UN Verification Mission

By www.360geopolitica.org

The Colombian peace process faces a pivotal moment as President Gustavo Petro pursues modifications to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), drawing renewed scrutiny from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Proposed changes to the JEP could directly affect the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), whose role is to monitor and verify the implementation of the peace accord. This interplay between domestic reform initiatives and international oversight underscores the complexity and fragility of Colombia's transitional justice framework. The Petro administration's "Total Peace" agenda seeks broad reforms to the JEP, emphasizing procedural rigor and *expanded* participation.

These reforms would require all individuals connected to the armed conflict—including combatants, non-combatants, and others indirectly involved—to appear before the JEP with full guarantees of due process. The administration frames these reforms as essential to enhancing truth-seeking, victim reparations, and non-repetition measures while *integrating former illegal armed groups and other criminal actors* into a comprehensive transitional justice framework. Implementation would demand substantial institutional adjustments and congressional approval, with a stated focus on protecting victims' rights (La Silla Vacía).

Domestic debate over these reforms has intensified. Former President Santos has argued that the JEP's handling of mid-level perpetrators *exceeds* its mandate, reflecting the enduring tension between accountability, justice delivery, and national reconciliation (Infobae).

Internationally, member states have adopted divergent positions on 31 October 2025 in New York. Russia abstained from the UNSC vote to extend the UNVMC mandate, citing concerns

that reducing oversight over JEP rulings and ethnic-rights protections could undermine transitional justice credibility and diminish protections for victims.

The United States, meanwhile, advocated *focusing* UNVMC's mandate, removing responsibilities for verifying JEP rulings and monitoring ethnic rights, while conditioning its support on *tangible* improvements in security, reintegration, and state presence in historically contested regions. After only partial incorporation of these recommendations, the U.S. abstained from the vote.

President Petro's rationale for seeking JEP modifications remains *insufficiently* clarified, despite its centrality in his government's presentations before the UNSC. His "Total Peace" approach, developed during his presidential campaign and through discussions at Picota Prison, envisions the incorporation of illegal armed groups and transnational criminal organizations from Colombia and Venezuela into negotiated arrangements. Under this framework, these actors *maintain* operational capabilities, territorial influence, and receive varying degrees of legal protection.

Since the *beginning* of Petro's presidency, Colombia has faced mounting security and governance challenges. The country has become the world's largest producer and exporter of cocaine, while illegal armed groups and criminal networks now control an estimated 75 percent of national territory. Several individuals with criminal backgrounds have been designated as *gestores de paz* (Peace Managers), conferring legal benefits, including one responsible -alias Samir- for the deaths of 13 military personnel (Infobae).

These developments *consolidate* the power of criminal actors, expand territorial control, intimidate government's opponents, and influence political dynamics ahead of the 2026 elections. The Ombudsperson recently submitted formal complaints requesting review

of at least five paramilitaries' appointments due to insufficient legal justification (Blu radio).

Allegations have also emerged regarding financial influence by illicit actors in the Petro campaign, including contributions from FARC dissidents, potentially facilitated by Vice President Francia Márquez (Noticias Caracol).

Such developments raise concerns that the Total Peace framework could *enable* individuals to offer testimony against political opponents while receiving legal protections, thereby *undermining* the integrity of transitional justice, weakening victims' rights, and concentrating political power under the guise of peace implementation.

Russia's position has been closely aligned with Petro's agenda, reflecting the so-called "Sameness Brotherhood" between Petro and Maduro (Infobae). Russian support at the UNSC has amplified Petro's demands to alter the JEP mandate in ways favorable to *Total Peace participants*, while domestically, aligned media outlets have echoed this narrative (El Espectador). However, Russia's *abstention* on the recent UNSC vote remains ambiguous, highlighting the geopolitical complexity of its involvement.

The United States has maintained a critical stance toward the Petro administration, emphasizing the need for UNVMC to remain *focused* on core objectives rather than overreaching *into* political or transitional justice matters.

The UNSC extended UNVMC's mandate for one year, narrowing its focus to three priority areas: reintegration of former FARC-EP members, security guarantees for ex-combatants and vulnerable communities, and comprehensive rural reform (UNSC Resolution 2805 (2025)).

This approach ensures a manageable mission while sustaining international support for Colombia's peace process, albeit with caution regarding gaps in justice and ethnic protections.

Domestically, the *Colombian delegation* at the UN in New York has been sidelined. President *Petro's politicization* of the process, combined with a passive mission strategy, undermined Colombia's influence at a decisive diplomatic moment. The delegation, composed of experienced career diplomats, *failed* to assert leadership or defend national priorities, leaving Colombia exposed and marginalized in matters directly affecting the integrity of its peace process.

The UNVMC itself has faced criticism for a lack of assertiveness. From 2018 to 2022, the Mission often appeared to echo left political messaging at the UNSC. Since Petro's presidency, the Mission has largely *refrained* from evaluating the government's faltering implementation of the peace accord, contributing to *perceptions of politicization and reduced credibility*. Victims and the Colombian public have been increasingly sidelined, eroding confidence in the Mission's impartiality and undermining the Peace Accord's objectives.

In conclusion, Colombia's peace process is at a crossroads. Modifications to the JEP, the influence of illegal armed groups and the organized crime, and the politicization of UN verification threaten the integrity of transitional justice and the broader goal of national reconciliation.

A robust, impartial UNVMC, coupled with transparent domestic governance and adherence to the Peace Accord, is essential to safeguarding victims' rights, restoring public confidence, and securing a sustainable path to peace.

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