

Colombia in Deep Crisis

On December 12, 2024, the analysis titled "Colombia Governed by Fear" was published, addressing alarming figures regarding human rights, massacres, organized crime, and the economic crisis. Since then, various national and international organizations have published their corresponding reports for 2024, confirming the diagnosis and revealing an even more severe situation than initially reported.

Colombia is going through a profound crisis in governance, human rights, and security. The current model of government, characterized by political violence, corruption, authoritarianism, and inefficiency, has increased the vulnerability of the population. Additionally, organized crime, which has formed an alliance with the government within the framework of "Total Peace," controls 70% of the territory because of the "Pacto de la Picota" during Petro's 2022 presidential campaign.

Amidst this crisis, Petro has made over 57 international trips and numerous domestic travels. His officials have made over 837 trips to Cuba and Venezuela, while his family members have also traveled several times, resulting in a cost exceeding 33 million dollars. Between these trips, along with his periods of illness and escapes, Petro has been absent from the direction of the country for over eight months.

Moreover, at least 3.5 million Colombians have left the country since Petro took office. This multifaceted crisis is exacerbated by Petro, whose policies and pomp seem to be inspired by his close ally and intimate friend, dictator Maduro, copying his policies and rhetoric.

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Introduction

For 32 months, Colombia has faced a profound crisis in governance, human rights, and security, worsening the humanitarian situation affecting more than 12 million people. A government style marked by political violence, corruption, lack of transparency, authoritarianism, and administrative inefficiency has increased the population's vulnerability, while social inequality continues to rise. This crisis is compounded by the persistence of internal armed conflicts and the presence of illegal groups, generating violence and forced displacements in various regions of the country.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has highlighted the severity of the situation, noting the increase in victims from explosive devices, forced displacements, and violations of international humanitarian law. Reports from organizations like the Ombudsman's Office, Indepaz, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have warned of the worsening violence against social leaders, human rights defenders, and ethnic communities, as well as the recruitment of minors by armed groups who use social media for this purpose.

Petro's response has been insufficient in protecting the most affected communities, particularly in areas like the Amazon, Catatumbo, Chocó, Cauca, and Vichada, where displacements and human rights violations are recurring. While there have been advancements in the peace process with the FARC, the implementation of agreements remains a challenge. However, violence from illegal armed actors, some of whom have ties to the government, continues to threaten the country's stability.

This context reflects Gustavo Petro's administration. His government has been marked by contempt for the rule of law and democratic institutions, challenging judicial decisions and violating the Constitution. He has also intervened in key investigations, threatened political opposition, and attacked judges and journalists, raising concerns about transparency and respect for human rights.

Throughout his term, violence and organized crime have significantly increased, with criminal groups controlling nearly 70% of the national territory. His "Total Peace" policy has allowed criminal organizations like the ELN, FARC dissidents, and the Gulf Clan, among others, to gain power, further destabilizing the country. Meanwhile, the Colombian economy is in decline, with rising inflation, unemployment, and a drop in foreign investment, exacerbated by controversial decisions in key sectors such as oil, mining, healthcare, security, and pensions.

Moreover, Colombia has become a transit point for human trafficking, partly due to Petro's permissive immigration policies. Internationally, his privileged diplomatic ties with regimes like Venezuela, Russia, and Iran have strained the country's traditional foreign relations. As violence and instability increase, international aid seems to focus more on supporting the government's agenda at the expense of human rights and democratic values.

1. An Oppressive Regime

Since taking office in August 2022, Petro has promoted a narrative of hate and violence, deepened social divisions and contributed to a progressively polarized society. Francia Márquez, the first Afro-Colombian woman to hold the vice presidency, has been particularly aggressive in exploiting resentment and hostility toward her political opponents and the white population of the country. The international community, as well as the national government, the ruling Pacto Histórico party, and its allied parties, find it "adorable" when Márquez speaks in this manner. This situation is concerning, as it highlights recurring mistakes made by governments and diplomatic bodies in conflict-ridden contexts. Such attitudes perpetuate a cycle of violence that could lead to civil war or worsen the already fragile situation in Colombia.

It is true that political violence is on the rise globally, driven by an increasingly disillusioned society that perceives it as a solution rather than a threat. In Colombia, Petro and Márquez often capitalize on this sentiment, mobilizing their followers through speeches full of passion. They deem violence acceptable to pressure Congress, the judiciary, the electoral system, and more than 75% of Colombians who do not support their policies.

Indeed, Petro showed autocratic tendencies from the beginning of his term, despite coming to power through a relatively democratic election. Since then, he has attempted to dismantle checks on executive power through populism, polarization, and grandiose communication. He begins with a democratic façade while subtly undermining the system's foundations and gradually moving toward despotism.

In addition to the rise in violent incidents, there has been an alarming increase in the tolerance of such behaviors under his administration. Petro has even suggested that violence is an acceptable response, encouraging the country's youth to engage in a cycle of aggression in support of his policies.

A former member of the M-19 movement, since taking office, Petro has urged his coalition, the Pacto Histórico, allied political parties, and his followers to organize protests under the M-19 flag. This movement is known for its involvement in the Palace of Justice tragedy, often referred to as genocide in Colombia, alongside other crimes and thefts. Although the M-19 has been granted amnesty, this does not erase the reality of its criminal actions. Amnesty does not exempt responsibility for those crimes.

By orchestrating protests where the M-19 flag is prominently displayed, Petro is re-victimizing judges throughout the country, especially those in high courts and independent institutions. His

goal is to pressure these officials, violating international standards for the protection of victims and their families, as well as Colombia's constitutional order.

2. Massacres

During the last year of the previous government in Colombia, news outlets reported massacres almost daily across the country. Since Petro assumed power, massacres have tripled, but the media, the UN, and the IACHR remain almost silent. The victims, mostly from government-allied groups under "Total Peace," are still unrecognized. Colombian NGOs, particularly from the left and extreme left, have also remained silent.

In 2024, figures for the killings of social leaders vary by source: the UN reported 72 massacres and 89 murders, while Indepaz reported 173 deaths, and La Silla Vacía documented 170. These differences reflect data collection methods and limited access to 70% of the territory.

On the international level, these incidents are not reported due to the pressure from actors like the Alianza and some international allies, who control the information. Since 2018, parties like Colombia Humana, Alianza Verde, and the Pacto Histórico, now in power, moved their communications center to Venezuela, backed by Russia, to manipulate social media and spread disinformation, as seen in the 2019-2021 protests. The UN and IACHR accepted this information without a thorough investigation, allowing the spread of propaganda funded by Maduro and Petro's allies involved in peace negotiations. Petro, who was once in opposition, has claimed without proof that he was surveilled by the previous government, seemingly justifying Maduro's intervention in Colombia. Between 2018 and 2022, Petro and his allies collaborated with groups like the ELN, former FARC members, and the Tren de Aragua, which drew scrutiny from the Colombian government.

The ELN, a criminal group based in Cuba and Venezuela, has profited from drug trafficking and illegal mining, causing severe ecological damage. One of their most notorious attacks was the bombing of the General Santander Police School, which killed 22 cadets. This event has been politically framed by Petro's followers as an attack on former president Duque, but it was an attack on Colombian democracy, ignored by the international community. The ELN, alongside Hezbollah and Hamas, receives support from Maduro and Petro, as this alliance serves their personal interests and those of certain former mayors in Colombia. Since Petro's arrival, the number of landmines in Colombia has increased, with at least 99 deaths in 2023 and almost double that number in 2024.

3. Human Trafficking

Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez have been accused of facilitating the increase in human trafficking in Colombia. Their decision to allow African citizens to enter without a visa has made the country a key transit point for human trafficking networks. While the measure aimed to strengthen diplomacy, it has jeopardized the safety of migrants, particularly those crossing the dangerous Darién Gap on their way to the United States.

This policy has empowered human traffickers, creating a new lucrative market for human exploitation. The phenomenon of trafficking has resurged to levels not seen since 2015, as migrants are increasingly exposed to exploitation by criminal groups benefiting from the situation.

4. Coca Cultivation

Colombia set a record for cocaine production in 2023, reaching 2,664 metric tons, a 53% increase from the 1,738 metric tons of 2022. Coca cultivation grew by 10%, from 230,000 to 253,000 hectares.

This made Colombia the world's leading producer of cocaine. Unlike the increase in 2021-2022, which was concentrated in Putumayo, the 2023 rise was more widespread. Coca production increased in 16 of the 19 departments, with Cauca and Nariño being the most affected.

The Pacific region saw significant expansion, especially in Cauca and Chocó, where new coca crops with high planting densities have been established. These areas resemble complex productive enclaves, making intervention more difficult. Coca cultivation is concentrated near drug exit routes, with high planting densities in certain areas.

In 2024, cocaine production and export increased by 14% compared to 2023 setting up a new record.. This is the only sector of Petro's economy that continues to rise, strengthening his partners in Total Peace.

Violence continues after the Peace Agreement, driven by groups like the ELN, the Gulf Clan, the Tren de Aragua, and dissident factions of the FARC. These organizations, linked to transnational organized crime, are Petro's partners in the so-called Total Peace. Data from the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) highlight a picture of violence driven by the organized crime groups. This includes dissident factions of the FARC-EP operating in the territory, coordinated by 'Iván Mordisco' and 'Segunda Marquetalia,' as well as the participation of the ELN and left-wing paramilitarism with its southwestern and western fronts.

5. A Strangled Economy

The Colombian economy is facing a challenging period under Petro's government, with many analysts comparing the current situation to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the government presents itself as the "government of change," various policies implemented have generated economic uncertainty, especially in key sectors such as oil and mining, which have historically been crucial to the country. Fiscal reforms and regulatory changes in these sectors have increased perceived risk, affecting confidence both domestically and internationally.

One of the main negative effects has been the rise in inflation, which has eroded the purchasing power of Colombians. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by global factors, such as international commodity prices, and by internal difficulties in controlling inflation. This has created an environment of economic instability that further worsens the living conditions of many families, especially those from lower-income backgrounds.

Unemployment remains another structural challenge. Despite efforts to reactivate the economy, high unemployment rates continue to affect economic growth, preventing a full recovery. The pandemic left deep scars in the labor market, and the lack of effective policies to generate formal employment has kept the situation critical. This translates into fewer opportunities for millions of Colombians, limiting economic development and perpetuating poverty.

Foreign investment, crucial for economic growth, has also declined due to the uncertainty generated by the reforms and the lack of clarity in government policies. This decrease in investment affects key sectors such as infrastructure, technology, and industry, limiting the potential for long-term sustainable economic development. Additionally, social protests have increased in response to various government decisions, creating an atmosphere of instability that disrupts economic activity and affects governance.

Finally, Petro has systematically failed the private sector in areas such as health, energy, rice production, access to medicines, and other essential goods for the basic family basket, with the sole

aim of driving them to bankruptcy. Relations with Nicolás Maduro's regime and the management of ECOPETROL have been controversial. Despite promises of a transition to cleaner energy, the country is facing a shortage of gas and oil, leading some to speculate about the need to import these resources from Venezuela to support the dictator's economy.

6. Total Peace

Through his "Total Peace" policy, Petro has empowered organized crime, which includes at least five major cartels and 23 drug-trafficking bands operating in 31 of the country's 32 departments. These groups control at least 456 of Colombia's 1,119 municipalities. Historically, they have been major supporters of the current government during its opposition phase, throughout the presidential campaign, and now as partners in the Total Peace negotiations. Petro has systematically allowed these and other criminal groups to consolidate their control over illegally occupied territories and subjugate local communities. Criminal groups like the ELN (National Liberation Army), the Gulf Clan, the Dissidents of the Central General Staff (ex-FARC), Segunda Marquetalia (ex-FARC), the Tren de Aragua, among others, have a combined membership of approximately 20,000. The Total Peace Initiative has allowed their growth and increased their access to illicit resources, strengthening their power to dominate communities neglected by the national government. Similarly, whenever the national government lacks a majority in Congress or faces unfavorable judicial rulings—beyond Petro's insults—it threatens the country with potential violence reminiscent of the 2021 riots. High-ranking officials, including the current Health Minister, frequently issue warnings, threatening: "Do you want another social explosion?"

These illegal armed groups and transnational organized crime cartels cooperate effectively, resulting in a significant shift in power dynamics. This cooperation has led to an increase in funding and specialization in key areas of Colombia and the region. Their transnational allies include Hezbollah, a strong supporter of the ELN, Hamas, the dictatorial Maduro regime, as well as Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel and the Tren de Aragua, which supports both the Venezuelan regime and Colombian criminal groups.

Since 2022, Petro has appointed some of the most controversial figures with criminal backgrounds as "peace managers." However, this practice is not new. It dates to 1997, when Law 418 established the role of "peace manager" for individuals linked to illegal armed groups. Under this law, these individuals are often released from prison to support humanitarian efforts or facilitate peace negotiations with such groups.

At least three factors distinguish Petro's appointments from those of other governments: first, he is fulfilling the promise made during his presidential campaign to secure their support; second, he is appointing the most ruthless criminals; and third, it is Petro who determines whether they are telling the truth or not. The Petro regime has formed a powerful and feared alliance with Maduro's dictatorship, the Colombian ruling party - The Historic Pact - other allied parties, and their partners in Total Peace. This coalition exerts considerable influence locally, nationally, and internationally, with significant geopolitical implications for both Colombia and the region. Since the beginning of this government, the alliance has followed a strategy of relentless rhetorical attacks and armed aggression against the Colombian people, with the goal of establishing permanent control over the country.

7. Rule of Law

Since Gustavo Petro assumed power, he has shown evident indifference toward the rule of law and fundamental democratic institutions. Throughout his government, he has repeatedly violated the country's Constitution and laws, openly defying judicial decisions, including those from the Constitutional Court. His disregard for judicial authority is evident in his constant disobedience to the rulings of the Council of State, which endangers the legal framework that should govern a democratic state.

This authoritarian behavior is also reflected in his interference with key investigations, such as the "suicide" of his head of security, suggesting his willingness to manipulate judicial processes and conceal facts that could compromise his administration.

His contempt for institutions is further intensified by the creation of a climate of intimidation and repression toward political opposition. In addition to disqualifying his opponents, Petro has threatened and insulted judges, journalists, women, and anyone who disagrees with his ideology, using his position to attack and intimidate those who oppose him.

In the economic sphere, he has distorted information by releasing figures prematurely, which affects transparency and undermines public trust. Similarly, his environmental policy has had destructive effects, with decisions harming crucial ecosystems in various regions of the country, once again demonstrating his lack of commitment to the collective well-being and the sustainable future of Colombia.

8. Unconditional Support for the Venezuelan Dictator

Petro maintains an intimate relationship with the dictator Nicolás Maduro. He was one of the few leaders to recognize him as the re-elected president of Venezuela, and additionally, he sent the Colombian ambassador in Caracas to Maduro's inauguration ceremony, which was an implicit recognition of the legitimacy of elections that were taken from Edmundo González Urrutia. At the ceremony, the ambassador participated enthusiastically, clapping and even standing up in response to Maduro's controversial statements.

It is important to remember that, since August 2022, Petro has made at least six official trips to Caracas. In the last 32 months, his officials have traveled to Cuba and Venezuela more than 837 times, without any details being made available about the agendas or costs of these trips. This situation reflects clear wastefulness, adding to the constant trips made by government members and allies in the Colombian Congress, who also validated the presidential elections and Maduro's inauguration, whose legitimacy is still in question.

Over the last twenty years, both Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro have claimed to have financed Petro's political career, which could explain his frequent trips to Caracas. On one of these trips, a suitcase filled with dollars disappeared, an incident involving his former chief of staff, an officer who ended up dead, and two women who were illegally interrogated in the basements of the presidential palace. One of the victims, in an interview with the media, stated, "Sarabia gave the order," referring to Petro's former chief of staff and current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sarabia.

Throughout the six trips made to Caracas, which so far seem to have had no concrete results, there remains the suspicion that Petro may have transported suitcases full of dollars meant for the dictator and mentor Nicolás Maduro.

Bogotá, Colombia, April 7, 2025.