

Colombia Presidential Election

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The 31 May will see the 2026 presidential election, emerging as one of the most violent in recent Colombian history. Voters face a pivotal choice: continue along the current path¹ or opt to *restore democracy*.

The field reflects a divided political landscape. Several candidates have entered the race independently, bypassing coalition consultations, while others have secured their place through these internal selection processes. The result is a crowded and fragmented ballot, underscoring both the diversity of political options and the challenges of building broad consensus².

Notably, of the 14 candidates initially registered, 13 remain on the ballot. At least five are aligned with or have emerged from President Petro's political orbit³, underscoring the breadth of the governing coalition. Given the crowded arena, a second-round runoff appears all but inevitable. In the first round, Petro's allies' strategy is to capture votes from the right and consolidate behind the main pro-Petro candidate should he advance to the second runoff⁴.

From the remaining eight candidates at least two are clearly from the right⁵, one from the center⁶, and other likely independent close to the government⁷.

Context

Colombia is experiencing a tremendous political violence and attacks on civilians, reaching levels not seen in over two decades. This deterioration has unfolded in the context of the government's "Total Peace" strategy, which involves engagement with illegal armed groups and organized crime⁸.

These criminal groups -today at least 27,000- are estimated to exert influence over roughly 70% of Colombia's territory. They are present in at least 600 of the country's 1,103 municipalities and maintain effective control in around 300 of them. In the March 8 legislative elections, the president's Pacto Histórico coalition secured around 4.5 million votes—about 23% of Congress. Some investigations showed that at least 2.4 million votes were secured by illegal armed groups and organized crime in 126 verified municipalities⁹.

Petro's "Total Peace" partners—illegal armed groups and organized crime—are playing a significant role during this electoral period. According to recent perceptions, at least 58,1% of Colombians believe these groups are exerting pressure on voters to support candidates from the Pacto Histórico, the president's political coalition, in both legislative and presidential elections¹⁰.

Petro's electoral violence

President Petro has, up to this point, systematically not respected electoral authorities or the applicable legislation.

He has been actively campaigning for his political party and its presidential candidates in ways that are inconsistent with constitutional and legal provisions.

He has also been using government resources, facilities, and public universities in a manner that provide an advantage in campaigning, while other candidates do not have similar access. More broadly, President Petro has repeatedly questioned and criticized the Colombian electoral system over the past four years¹¹.

According to findings attributed to Colombia's Attorney General's Office, individuals linked to the government's "Total Peace" policy and FARC dissident structures have been implicated in threats against opposition figures, including presidential candidates, following the assassination of Miguel Uribe Turbay.

Authorities have identified José "Zarco" Aldinever Sierra and Iván Márquez—both associated with the Segunda Marquetalia—as key suspects. Prosecutors link them to the planning and financing of the attack. Sierra had been designated a peace mediator under President Gustavo Petro's "Total Peace" framework, a status that allowed freedom of movement during negotiations.

Critics argue this enabled operational latitude for criminal coordination under the cover of the process. His designation was revoked only after the assassination of Miguel Uribe Turbay, by which point he had returned to Venezuela.

Today, reports indicate that the ELN¹² has offered a reward of two billion Colombian pesos for the assassination of Senator and presidential candidate Paloma Valencia. The information has been confirmed in public statements by Colombia's Minister of Defense and Minister of the Interior. However, President Petro has denied these allegations¹³.

Critics have also pointed to increasingly harsh rhetoric from President Petro and Senator Iván Cepeda, a leading figure within the administration, directed at political opponents. They argue that this tone risks fueling further escalation in an already volatile environment, where civilian populations continue to face attacks from criminal groups linked to the Total Peace deal aligned with the government.

In this context, parts of the international community—particularly some European governments with interests tied to disputed deals in aviation, passport systems, and financing—have continued to back Petro's administration. They have invested significant capital in promoting the "Total Peace" narrative, at times portraying its interlocutors in a notably sympathetic, even valorized, light.

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¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/apr/29/colombia-election-total-peace-promise-violence>
² <https://wapp.registraduria.gov.co/electoral/2026/presidente-de-la-republica/registro-candidatos.html>

³ Claudia López, Clara López (joined Cepeda campaign), Iván Cepeda, Mauricio Lizcano, and Roy Barreras.

⁴ It's likely that the government is also providing full economic backing for these campaigns, much as it does for its main candidate, Senator Iván Cepeda.

⁵ Senator Paloma Valencia and Abelardo de la Espriella.

⁶ Dr. Sergio Fajardo, this is his third candidacy.

⁷ Seen. 1 for all names and Vice-presidents candidates.

⁸ 20260413 petro the predator: mass killing and Environmental Devastation in Colombia, www.360geopolitica.org

⁹ *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.

¹⁰ https://fx.com/alejoramirez/status/2049107490315329616?s=48&t=XXaP_KoOBnsRAoWVA9NG2A

¹¹ 20260221 Petro Threatens Colombia's Elections, www.360geopolitica.org

¹² Petro call them his brothers and sisters.

¹³ President Petro rejected it, arguing that releasing the information could give Senator Paloma Valencia an advantage at the ballot box.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cf9sWIZKOM#:~:text=El%20presidente%20Gustavo%20Petro%20terminó%20corrigiendo%20la,existe%20un%20atentado%20en%20marcha%20contra%20la>