

Violence and hate speech as Political Tools of Petro

by Fernando Mora¹

Throughout Colombia's history, the country has gone through periods of deep violence, stemming from partisan disputes, armed conflict, drug trafficking, and the struggle for territorial control between various actors. However, it is perhaps the *first time in the last 65 years* that violence has become a central element of government strategy under the administration of Gustavo Petro.

In the 2018 presidential elections, Iván Duque was elected with 53.98% of the vote, compared to 41.8% for Gustavo Petro, who took his seat as a senator. Reports suggest that Petro and the opposition received financial support from illegal armed groups and organized crime in exchange for political backing, further destabilizing the country and threatening the integrity of the constitutional order.

Between 2018 and 2022, Petro and his allies organized national protests that led to the social outbreak of 2021. While it has been claimed that these demonstrations were spontaneous and peaceful, various local and international sources highlight the involvement of groups such as FARC dissidents, the ELN, the Nueva Marquetalia, the Tren de Aragua, and Hezbollah in intensifying the violence during that period. Furthermore, Petro and his allies have maintained close ties with dictators like Maduro and with illegal actors, raising serious doubts about the implications of these relationships for Colombian politics.

Since taking office in 2022, Petro has fostered a confrontational, daily, and systematic rhetoric of constant siege, deepening social divisions in Colombia. In particular, Vice President Francia Márquez has adopted an aggressive stance toward political opposition and the white population, continuously eroding national cohesion and social peace.

The most alarming aspect of this situation is the use of violence as a political tool. Petro and his administration have promoted its use to pressure

more than 75% of the population that does not share their policies, Congress, and other state institutions, representing a direct threat to the democratic system and the rule of law. The constant references to violence, along with the delegitimization of judicial bodies and the electoral system by Petro and high-ranking officials, contribute to creating an environment of deep division and fear.

On the other hand, the so-called "Total Peace" proposed by Petro has facilitated the consolidation of criminal groups and drug cartels operating in various regions of the country, increasing their power and influence over Colombian territory. Instead of improving security, this policy has contributed to the expansion of violence and drug trafficking, as well as undermining state authority over at least 70% of the national territory. *Cocaine production has reached historic levels* during the last two years, which seems to coincide with promises made by Petro and his political allies, such as the former mayor of Bogotá, to organized crime.

During the presidential campaign, Petro and his allies offered organized crime and illegal groups such as the ELN, Clan del Golfo, and others (The Pacto de la Picota) at least three key commitments: allowing them to continue their illicit activities (1), granting them territorial control (2), and offering them absolute immunity (3). These promises have created an environment of impunity that favors the expansion of criminal activities, severely undermining the security and well-being of citizens.

Under Petro's leadership, since 2022, political violence in Colombia has increased alarmingly.

Various human rights organizations have documented a significant rise in the violation of rights in different regions of the country, especially by groups linked to his political environment. The number of massacres in the country has tripled since his arrival, maintaining, paradoxically, a media silence on this serious human rights violation.

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Violence against children, adolescents, and women has reached worrying levels. Under Gustavo Petro's leadership, many minors have been victims of homicides related to armed conflict, while gender-based violence cases have affected a greater number of women compared to previous years.

Additionally, the increase in the recruitment of minors by organized crime within the framework of "Total Peace" is also a grave concern. These figures reflect the growing impact of violence on broad sectors of the population, generating deep concerns about respect for fundamental rights and the security of Colombians under his administration.

The political and logistical support that Gustavo Petro and his allies have provided to Nicolás Maduro's regime, as well as to groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, has raised fears about their backing of violence, human rights violations, extrajudicial executions, and electoral fraud in Venezuela. This support could have significant geopolitical repercussions for Colombia.

It is important to remember that Petro has visited Maduro five times, and during one of those visits, a report was made about the loss of a suitcase filled with thousands of dollars, attributed to his former chief of staff. This incident has raised doubts about the true purpose of Petro's visits to the Venezuelan regime.

Finally, the alliance between Petro's government, the Historic Pact, and organized crime has triggered a series of systematic actions that affect Colombia's sovereignty. The territorial control of these groups, along with the lack of effective responses from the government, has kept the country in a state of constant siege, endangering national stability.

This strategy by Petro and his allies, to keep the country in total socioeconomic chaos, aims to subject it to organized crime, their main ally. The goal is to maintain constant pressure on the country to remain in power, allowing their partners to control national territory and continue committing crimes without fear of being arrested or disturbed by Petro's government. In other

words, Petro seeks once again to emulate his idol Maduro and turn Colombia into a Venezuela II.

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Bogotá, Colombia, March 5, 2025