



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Watch Emergency: Colombia May 2021

Genocide Watch is issuing a genocide emergency for Colombia. Armed militias are carrying out massacres and targeted killings of civilians and human rights defenders. Police forces are killing and detaining protesters.

Despite the 2016 peace agreement, which aimed to end the [over five decades of conflict](#) between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), violence remains pervasive in [many areas of Colombia](#). Several rebel groups remain active, including [Patriotic Forces of National Liberation \(FPLN\)](#), [National Liberation Army \(ELN\)](#), and offshoots of the FARC formed by dissidents who refused to demobilize, such as the Martín Villa 10th Front.

These armed groups function as the de facto police in [some regions of the country](#), imposing stringent rules—including curfews and limits on everyday social and economic activities. Armed groups exact brutal punishments for those who do not comply with their rules: forced labor, sexual violence, and murder. Violence in regions controlled by these groups escalated in 2020, [reaching record levels](#).

Since these armed groups lack the military might for direct confrontation with the Colombian army, they frequently [retaliate against civilian populations](#). Armed groups carry out [mass killings](#) of civilians. [Human rights groups](#) have reported 158 murders of civilians in 2021 alone. Civilians in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to [landmines](#), left behind by armed groups.

The Colombian government has been unsuccessful in ensuring the security of civilians, particularly in rural areas, and the deployment of military force has been focused primarily on [protecting oil infrastructure](#).

Colombian security forces have also been perpetrators of grave human rights abuses, including [opening fire on civilians](#). In late April 2021, [protests broke out](#), sparked by a now canceled tax bill and [driven by rising poverty](#), unemployment, and corruption. Colombian police forces have used [excessive force](#) against demonstrators. Both [government sources](#) and [NGOs](#) have reported dozens of deaths, disappearances, sexual abuses, and serious injuries related to protests. Police have [fired at and killed protesters](#).

[Indigenous groups](#) are disproportionately impacted by the violence in rural areas. Most of the clashes between armed groups take place in rural areas of the country, [displacing Indigenous groups](#) from their ancestral lands. Many armed groups finance their activities through coca production, causing [environmental degradation](#) and [humanitarian crises](#).

Human rights defenders and activists, many of whom are Indigenous or Afro-Colombian, are particularly vulnerable to attacks from armed groups. So far in 2021, [67 social leaders and human rights defenders](#) have been killed. Of the [solved murders](#) of social leaders, armed groups committed 59% of the killings, unknown perpetrators carried out 39%, and military personnel committed 2%.

Due to armed groups' disregard of the 2016 peace agreement and continued forced displacement, sexual violence, and extrajudicial killings of civilians, Genocide Watch considers Colombia to be at **Stage 5:**

Organization and Stage 8: Persecution.

Recommendations:

- The Colombian government should implement the programs laid out in the 2016 peace agreement: invest in rural areas, provide pathways out of coca production for farmers, and support the reintegration of ex-FARC fighters.
- The Colombian government should strengthen protection for human rights defenders and Indigenous groups to permit them to remain in their communities and continue their work.
- Donor nations should support efforts to promote human rights and the removal of landmines.