

3. Armed conflict and peace processes in the Americas

Overview

The Americas presented a complex and mixed picture for peace during 2020, with worsening conflict in certain countries, but less violence in some, partly as a result of Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. In others armed violence continued at a similar level to that in 2019. Two countries—Colombia and Mexico—had several parallel non-international armed conflicts on their territories.

Implementation of the 2016 peace accord between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo, FARC–EP) continued to encounter problems. Non-international armed conflicts with other armed non-state groups and paramilitary organizations continued. More FARC–EP dissidents joined armed groups, and violence against civil society actors increased.

In Mexico there were three non-international armed conflicts: between the Government of Mexico and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación) and the Sinaloa Cartel, and between those two cartels. Homicides declined slightly in 2020 but remained at a very high level, while government efforts to counter the cartels became increasingly militarized.

The region hosted three multilateral peace operations: the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, the Organization of American States Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia and the UN Integrated Office in Haiti.

Homicide rates across the region varied significantly. Several countries had some of the highest homicide rates in the world, such as Jamaica, while other countries had significant reductions, including El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Venezuela. Several countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Honduras and Mexico, experienced targeted political violence towards human rights activists and social movement representatives. As a result of Covid-19 lockdowns, 2020 did not bring a repeat of the often-violent mass demonstrations and riots that occurred throughout 2019 in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador, which had been driven by public frustrations with poor economic conditions, growing inequalities and political corruption. Nevertheless, popular protests broke out sporadically in response to political crises in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru, and several allegations of harsh public-order policing responses.

MARINA CAPARINI