

Timeline

1718 - Bogota is named the capital of the Spanish viceroyalty of Nueva Granada.

1819 - Simon Bolivar's independence forces defeat the Spaniards and establish the Republic of Gran Colombia, which includes modern day Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia.

1829-1830 - The Republic of Gran Colombia breaks up when Venezuela and Ecuador separate, resulting in the new state of Nueva Granada.

1899-1903 - Approximately 120,000 people are killed in the civil war between liberals and conservatives known as "The War of the Thousand Days". Panama gains independence.

1948 - The leftist mayor of Bogota is assassinated resulting in "Bogotazo" or urban riots. From 1948 - 1957, 250,000 - 300,000 people die as a result of civil war.

1958 - In an attempt to end the civil war, the National Front is formed and all other parties are banned.

1965 - Leftist National Liberation Army or Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Maoist People's Liberation Army (EPL) are formed.

1966 - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) is formed.

1970 - Left leaning National People's Alliance is formed as a counter balance to the National Front.

1971 - M-19, a left wing group, is formed.

1984 - Following the assassination of the justice minister, the fight against drug traffickers is intensified.

1985 - M-19 guerrillas forcefully enter the Palace of Justice, resulting in the deaths of over 90 people and 11 judges. The Patriotic Union Party (UP) is formed.

1986 - Liberal president Virgilio Barco Vargas is elected. UP politicians are targeted in a murder campaign by right-wing paramilitary groups, death squads continue to be operated by drug traffickers, and violence continues to be perpetrated by left-wing groups.

1991 - The new constitution bans the extradition of Colombians to other nations for trials, legalizes divorce, and fails to address territorial issues for indigenous peoples, but guarantees their domestic rights.

1998 - Conservative Andres Pastrana Arango begins peace talks with guerrillas after being elected president. FARC is given a large safe haven, which is off limits to the army, in order to keep peace talks moving.

2000 - U.S. gives \$1 billion in military aid to fight drug trafficking. Talks between the government and FARC are stopped in September when the government accuses FARC of harboring a hijacker. FARC later refuses to continue the talks, citing Patrana's inability to stop paramilitary groups.

2001 - FARC returns to talks. Safe haven area is extended for eight months. 359 police and military hostages are freed in exchange for 14 rebels. Ceasefire agreement is signed and the safe haven area is extended until January of 2002.

2005 - The capture of a FARC leader in Venezuela leads to a 15 day dispute with the Colombia government. Reduced prison sentences and protection from extradition are offered to paramilitaries in exchange for their weapons.

2006 - Free trade deal is agreed to with the U.S.

2007 - Dozens of FARC guerrillas are released in a goodwill gesture. Continued conflict and kidnappings lead thousands to protest in Bogota. After failing to secure a resolution between rebels and the government, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez withdraws Venezuela's ambassador to Bogota.

2008 - A diplomatic crisis with Ecuador and Venezuela is sparked after a FARC member is killed in a Colombian strike in Ecuador. 14 warlords are extradited to the US for drug trafficking. 15 hostages held by FARC are freed by the army.

2009 - US troops get access to military bases as a means of fighting drug traffickers. Colombian and Venezuelan tensions are further heightened after Venezuela is accused of supplying weapons to FARC. Chavez claims Colombia's military is holding raids inside Venezuela. Chavez orders 15,000 troops to the border and urges his military to prepare for war. FARC and ELN announce plans to stop fighting each other in order to focus on attacking government forces.

2010 - Juan Manuel Santos is elected as president and demands the release of all hostages before peace talks occur. FARC increases violence. Senior FARC commander Mono Jojoy is killed in a Colombian air strike.

2011 - FARC releases hostages as a "gesture of peace" towards the government. A new law allows for compensation to victims of conflict and for the return of land to millions of displaced people. Jorge Noquera, the former intelligence chief, is given a 25-year prison sentence for working with paramilitary death squads. Protests against FARC spread across the country.

2012 - FARC releases 10 police and military hostages, sparking hope of peace talks. Congress authorizes guidelines for peace talks with FARC. FARC resumes abductions, despite making promises to stop. Henry de Jesus Lopez, believed to lead the Urabenos gang that controls most of northern Colombia's drug trade, is arrested in Argentina. As peace talks begin in Cuba, FARC declares a two-month ceasefire.

2013 - 2,500 people are displaced in one week in November due to fighting among paramilitary groups. 5 million people remain displaced throughout the country. Ivan Marquez, FARC chief negotiator, appeals to unions and left-wing parties to join peace efforts.

2014 - Colombian government illegally removes mayor of Bogota. President Santos later reinstates him in a Presidential order. Peace talks continue between Colombian government and FARC. President Santos is reelected to another 4-year term.

2015 - FARC and the government agree to landmine removal. Despite a unilateral ceasefire, FARC kills 11 soldiers resulting in the government resumption of air strikes. FARC declares intention to continue peace talks in spite of ceasefire suspension.



Torture Methods

TORTURE, including rape, terrifies the population, thereby leading to mass displacement and assurance of complete control over an area. In addition, torture is used to intimidate civilians, trade unionists, journalists, human rights defenders, and victims seeking justice or restitution of land. Torture is also used to force civilians to self incriminate and to extract information.

EXTORTION has been used by guerilla groups, paramilitary groups, security forces, and the military as a means to raise money and to intimidate civilians.

KIDNAPPING has been used by all groups to raise money. Many kidnapping victims are often killed or “disappeared”.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES have been used by the military against those believed to be members of either paramilitary or guerilla groups.

MURDER has been used to intimidate victims into admitting allegiances, informing on the actions or allegiances of friends, community or family members, and to tell the perpetrator the whereabouts of associates.

RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT have been used in order to torture and intimidate. All groups have been accused of perpetrating these crimes, but paramilitaries have been reported to have forced women on their knees to beg for forgiveness while objects are inserted into their vaginas. They have reportedly cut off women’s breasts and gouged out the eyes of women.

THREATS AND INTIMIDATION have been used to extort money and to force people to flee from their homes.

BEATINGS have been used to get people to admit real or believed affiliations with warring groups, to intimidate and force people to pay money, to keep people quiet, and to get people to go along with the group.

DISMEMBERMENT for failure to provide information continues to occur mostly from paramilitary groups.

DROWNING SIMULATION has been used to force people to admit their allegiance or involvement with guerilla groups.

ELECTRIC SHOCKS have been used to force people to admit their “crimes” and their “allegiance” to other groups.

CRUEL AND INHUMAN TREATMENT OF PRISONERS including being exposed to extreme forms of weather, being given contaminated or rotten food, and being denied family visitation or visitation with lawyers has been reported.

RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS continues to occur by FARC and ELN guerilla groups.

Current Situation

Language: Spanish (official)

Population: 46,736,728 (July 2015 est.)

Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%

Ethnic Groups: mestizo and white 84.2%, Afro-Colombian (includes multatto, Raizal, and Palenquero) 10.4%, Amerindian 3.4%, Roma <.01, unspecified 2.1%

VIOLENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES have continued over the last 45 years. Violence has left over 5.7 million Colombians displaced, with 200,00 fleeing their homes each year.

GUERRILLA GROUPS continue to plague Colombia. While FARC and the Colombian government have been engaged in peace talks since 2012, FARC still operate in many parts of Colombia, but maintain the strongest presence in some of the eastern and southern departments. Their main source of income is gained through kidnapping and drug trafficking. The ELN is engaged in peace talks with the government, and is strongest in the east, but also has a presence in other departments of Colombia. Human rights abuses; such as, murder, kidnappings, torture, sexual violence, forced displacement, threats, extortion, and the recruitment of children continue to be used by guerilla groups. FARC has also used landmines and other explosive devices in order to randomly attack civilians and for targeting politicians.

PARAMILITARY GROUPS, formed in the 1960s in an effort to aid the military in counterinsurgency operations, underwent a flawed demobilization process between 2003-2006. While paramilitary groups are no longer as unified, there are still disparate groups operating with differing motivations. These groups propagate terror and help to repel responsibility for human rights abuses away from security forces. Civilians, human rights defenders, trade unionists, community leaders, as well as the LGBT community, are often the target of human rights abuses; such as, murder, disappearances, abductions, sexual violence and dismemberment. Estimates suggest that 33,000 people were displaced in 2013, and 22,383 in 2014 due to paramilitary activity.

SECURITY FORCES executed a large number of civilians under President Uribe’s administration between 2002 and 2008. Soldiers often killed civilians and reported them as enemy combatants under pressure from superiors to increase enemy combat casualties. While these cases have reduced, new cases have emerged in recent years.

PREVALENT AND SYSTEMIC SEXUAL VIOLENCE perpetrated by guerillas, paramilitaries, and security forces have forced women and girls into sexual slavery. Sexual violence is used to propagate fear in order to induce control, to force people to flee their homes in order to allow land to be taken, to gain revenge, or to keep them from exposing abuse. The social stigma and humiliation associated with rape keep victims from coming forward. In addition, rape is often under reported because of the fear of future violence and a lack of security and confidence in the justice system. While a 2012 law was passed to protect victims of sexual violence, implementation of post-rape care remains optional for medical providers.

LAND RESTITUTION LAWS enacted in 2011 have resulted in rulings in about 1,500 of almost 68,000 cases despite government promises of judicial rulings on 150,000 cases by the end of 2015. Internally displaced people who attempt to regain land face threats and violence. Impunity continues to plague those responsible for most of the deaths of land restitution leaders and claimants.