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FEATURED Q&A

Is the U.N. Still Needed to Keep Colombia's Peace?



A United Nations mission has been overseeing compliance with Colombia's 2016 peace accord with the FARC rebels. U.N. workers are pictured earlier this month helping to repair a bridge in the Colombian town of Marquetalia. // Photo: U.N. Verification Mission in Colombia.

Q Colombian President Iván Duque on Jan. 8 asked the United Nations to extend its peace verification mission in the country until the end of his term in 2022. The tasks of the mission include monitoring compliance with the government's 2016 peace accord with the FARC rebels. Also this month, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed alarm at the "staggering number" of social activists killed in Colombia in recent years. How well has the peace accord been implemented, and how important has the U.N. mission been to ensuring compliance? What has led to the high number of killings of social activists, and what should be done to stop the attacks? How well are Duque's government and the FARC adhering to the accord?

A Humberto de la Calle, former vice president of Colombia and chief government negotiator in the peace process with the FARC: "President Duque's request to extend the U.N. verification mission is the right step. The international community, and in particular the decisions of the U.N. Security Council, have been crucial to keeping the peace process alive in Colombia. It is even more timely after the High Commissioner for Human Rights underscored the seriousness of what is happening. Dozens of social leaders and ex-combatants have been killed. The peace accord created robust mechanisms to guarantee life, and they should be implemented and perfected. These deaths are an Achilles' heel in achieving a sustainable peace. The current government initially proclaimed its aim to unilaterally modify the agreement, which was a serious mistake. However, in relation to the reinstate-

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Mexico Detains 800 Migrants Who Entered Illegally

Mexican authorities detained 800 Central American migrants who entered Mexico illegally from Guatemala, officials said. The migrants, who were seeking to reach the United States, were transferred to immigration centers.

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BUSINESS

BNP Paribas Plans New Innovation Center in Brazil

The French banking group aims to foster start-ups and help larger firms become more efficient.

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POLITICAL

U.S. Planning to Send First Ambassador to Bolivia Since 2008

Amid improving relations between the two countries, the State Department's David Hale said Washington will send its first ambassador to Bolivia in nearly 12 years.

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Hale // File Photo: U.S. State Department.

POLITICAL NEWS

Mexican Authorities Detain 800 Central American Migrants

Mexican authorities on Thursday detained 800 Central American migrants who crossed the Guatemalan border into Mexico illegally on their way to the United States, Reuters reported. Mexico is under intense pressure from the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to stop migrants, mostly from Central America, from moving further north. Mexico's National Migration Institute, or INM, said it had transferred 800 migrants, some of them unaccompanied minors, to immigration centers where they would be provided food, medical attention and shelter. If migrants' legal status cannot be resolved, they will be sent back to their home countries. Another 200 migrants remained in the area, the INM said, adding that it was looking for them, Reuters reported. The 800 migrants had been walking for hours along a rural highway, the Associated Press reported. Mexican authorities said the migrants "demanded permits for free transit through Mexico to the United States," kneeling to the ground in prayer and chanting, "We want to pass," the AP reported. National guardsmen in riot gear and carrying plastic shields and batons then advanced toward the migrants, and there was shoving and pepper spray as migrants were rounded up, the wire service reported.

Peruvians Head to Polls Sunday to Select Lawmakers

Voters in Peru head to the polls Sunday to select members of Congress nearly four months after President Martín Vizcarra dissolved the body. At the time that Vizcarra took the action on Sept. 30, polls showed that some 70 percent of Peruvians supported the move. However, more recent polls indicate that voters have shown widespread apathy, suggesting that the

reconstituted Congress could be splintered and without a working majority, The Washington Post reported. None of the 21 parties competing for seats consistently has support in the double digits. Voting is mandatory in Peru, but the most popular option ahead of Sunday's vote appears to be spoiling the ballot by leaving it blank or defacing it, which 40 percent of voters say is their intention. "People wanted change, but they're not necessarily informing themselves about the new candidates," Alfredo Torres of polling group Ipsos Peru told The Washington Post. "Predictably, they may end up voting for more of the same, which then would lead to even more disenchantment." The new Congress is to serve for just more than a year, until the current legislative term expires. In next year's election, neither the legislators who were dismissed in September nor the ones elected on Sunday will be eligible to run. When he dissolved Congress, Vizcarra said he was making the move in order to break a political impasse. The opposition-controlled Congress had blocked his attempts to push through anti-corruption reforms that he has long said are needed. The Odebrecht scandal, in which the Brazilian construction company paid nearly \$800 million in bribes across Latin America, has ensnared four former Peruvian presidents. Vizcarra's predecessor, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, is under house arrest pending potential charges, and prosecutors say they plan to charge former Presidents Ollanta Humala and Alejandro Toledo. Former President Alan García fatally shot himself last April as police arrived at his home to arrest him.

U.S. Planning to Send First Ambassador to Bolivia Since 2008

The United States is planning to send its first ambassador in more than a decade to Bolivia in a bid to restore a "normal relationship" between the two countries, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale said in a video statement posted online on Thursday. The United States has had a lower-ranking diplomat in La Paz since former Bolivian Presi-

NEWS BRIEFS

Killings by Police in Rio de Janeiro State Hit Record High

The number of killings by police in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state rose to 1,810 people last year, the highest number since records began in 1998, Brazilian officials said, BBC News reported Thursday. Critics blame a security approach that includes using heavily armed agents and helicopter-borne snipers to fight criminals in densely populated areas. However, officials say the policies have worked, citing a drop in violent crime. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in the May 15 issue of the Advisor.]

Brazil Wants to Boost Oil Output Without Joining OPEC: Energy Minister

Brazil wants to increase its oil production without joining the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, Energy Minister Bento Albuquerque told Bloomberg News Thursday. "The idea is just to increase our production and to participate more in the international oil and gas market," he told the news service in an interview in New Delhi. "But this is not a plan for Brazil to join OPEC or any other association or group of oil and gas producers. We don't want restrictions, we want to increase our production."

Mexico's Banorte Reports 12 Percent Decline in Net Profit for Fourth Quarter

Mexico's Grupo Financiero Banorte, which owns the country's second-largest bank and its largest pension fund, on Thursday posted a 12 percent decrease in fourth-quarter net profit from the same quarter a year ago, Reuters reported. Net profit in last year's fourth quarter was 9.01 billion pesos (\$477 million) due to losses from Banorte's largest business unit, Banco Mercantil del Norte, which operates as Banorte in Mexico, the group said.

dent Evo Morales ordered the last ambassador, Philip Goldberg, to leave in 2008, blaming him for anti-government protests, Reuters reported. The move underscores the improving relations between the United States and Bolivia since Morales, a leftist, resigned in November after a controversial re-election a month earlier sparked widespread protests against him.

BUSINESS NEWS

France's BNP Paribas Creating Innovation Center in São Paulo

French banking group BNP Paribas is working with three other companies to establish a new innovation center in São Paulo, Reuters reported Thursday. The new facility is an effort to foster start-ups and also help larger companies to become more efficient, the wire service reported. BNP Paribas is working on the project, to be called La Fabrique, with Carrefour Brasil, card and prepaid meal voucher provider Edenred and Ingenico Group, a developer of financial transactions systems. "We are looking for start-ups that may help BNP gain efficiency," said Sandrine Ferdane, the chief executive officer and country head for BNP Paribas in Brazil. "As lower interest rates globally reduce margins, efficiency is key." BNP Paribas wants to finish at least eight projects this year, two for each of the banking group's four business sectors—its Arval fleet-management unit and retail banking section Cetelem, as well as its insurance unit Cardiff and its corporate and institutional banking department. BNP Paribas already invests in start-ups in France, and it may expand those investments to Brazil. The bank has more than 1 billion euros available for investments, said Sandrine. Edenred has chosen five start-ups to work in the new innovation hub, said Gilles Coccoli, its chief operating officer in the Americas. "We have worked with 15 start-ups over the last three years and now we decided to relocate some resources and concentrate our innovation initiatives at La Fabrique," said Coccoli.

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ment of ex-combatants, it has been reasonably complying. However, some issues have not been developed: comprehensive rural reform, which is essential to stabilizing the countryside, and political reform in order to make Colombia's democracy more inclusive and cleaner. Among the decisions that must be promoted is comprehensive compliance with the peace accord, which will help solve the problem of illicit crops and which will give peace to the inhabitants of remote regions. Most of the former FARC rebels remain firmly in compliance with the accord. Dissidence and suspicions have arisen, and there are surviving links with drug trafficking. The FARC must also expedite the delivery of property for victims' reparations. In essence, there are concerns, but with moderate optimism, I think we will move forward."

A Gimena Sánchez-Garzoli, director for the Andes at the Washington Office on Latin America: "Despite President Duque's efforts to undermine the transitional justice system and the alarming killings of social leaders, the Colombian peace process has advanced. If fully and effectively implemented, the accord provides a historic opportunity to make Colombia safer, more equitable and politically diverse. The achievements of the peace accord are in large part due to the international community's insistence on their advancement and the financial support provided. The U.N. verification mission is instrumental in guaranteeing fairness and objectivity as to whether the parties are holding up their end of the bargain. U.N. voices, including that of the U.N. Human Rights Office, are crucial at a time when the right to peace has been distorted to meet political gains by those who oppose peace. The killings of social leaders are occurring because there exists other guerrilla and illegal armed groups besides the FARC dissidents who kill whomever opposes structural change in conflictive areas. Rather than denying the problem and understating

it, the Duque administration should increase political will in seeking negotiations with the ELN and the commission for guarantees set up by the accord to dismantle illegal armed groups that undermine security. The United Nations should be commended for not backing down despite the tremendous pressure it is under by the Duque administration to change the narrative of the conflict."

A Erin McFee, postdoctoral teaching fellow at the University of Chicago and visiting fellow at the Latin America and Caribbean Centre of the London School of Economics: "Colombia presents sufficient need at present to easily justify an extension of the United Nations peace verification mission. Importantly, the mission's mandate includes provisions for monitoring the reincorporation process and guaranteeing citizen security. However, such an extended presence should neither be confused with nor substitute for immediate governmental accountability for protecting social leaders, who are currently being murdered at a rate of more than one per day. President Duque's administration has been, at best, ambiguous about its support for implementing the peace accord. FARC reincorporation has suffered from chronically low levels of inter-institutional coordination, and issues with the social integration of these individuals in terms of stigmatization, inclusion and violence. Since the signing of the peace accord, no fewer than 173 reincorporating members of the FARC have been killed. Furthermore, the leadership split between the FARC political party, committed to disarming and political participation, and 'FARC II'—those who continue to promote illegal armed action—has created new opportunities for existing dissidents and those disenchanted with the reincorporation process to align with other armed groups and potentially increase their strength over time. In both the cases of the civil society leaders and the reincorporating FARC, the Duque government must urgently

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provide security for those who report threats against them. It must also show substantive advances in the mandates of the peace accord or risk yet another devolution into protracted low-level conflict and the loss of an unprecedented historical opportunity. Extending the U.N. mission could help to maintain international pressure on the Duque administration to comply with the accord.”

A **Elvira Maria Restrepo, associate professor of international studies at The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs:** “The broad goals of the accord were to end the armed conflict and extend the state's presence to rural Colombia. Positive outcomes are that the conflict ended; the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has been successful, with 90 percent of ex-combatants still complying with the accord; thousands of victims are being aided; and the FARC has become a legal political party. On the negative side, implementation is still lacking; and the government has not been able to occupy the vacuum left by the FARC, with this instead being taken over by organized criminals, FARC dissidents and ELN guerrillas. There has also been little progress on rural reform. The political nature

of the mission, different from the United Nations' traditional peacekeeping ones, has proven very important. It has helped foster trust between parties in conflict and brings much-needed international oversight. Killings of social leaders have increased in the past months. The reasons behind the killings vary regionally, as do the instigators. Duque maintains that these killings are the result of drug trafficking violence. Social leaders and human rights organizations claim the killings are instigated not only by drug traffickers, but also by legal national and multinational businesses seeking to exploit oil, mining or palm oil. Some leaders claim that public forces are behind some of the killings. The most recent report by Martha Mancera, the director of the prosecutor's dismantling unit of criminal organizations, shows that 78 percent of the assassinations in sentenced cases were instigated by private orders. Judicializing who is behind these and extending the state's presence beyond that of the army to targeted regions is urgently needed to stop the attacks. Duque's government has opposed and slowed the implementation of crucial parts of the accord. His ambiguity in terms of support does not help. The FARC, aside from its dissidents, shows a good level of compliance.”

LATIN AMERICA ADVISOR

is published every business day by the Inter-American Dialogue, Copyright © 2020

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Latin America Advisor is published every business day, except for major U.S. holidays, by the Inter-American Dialogue at 1155 15th Street NW, Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005

www.thedialogue.org

ISSN 2163-7962

Subscription inquiries are welcomed at ebrand@thedialogue.org

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Advisor Video

The 2020 U.S. Presidential Race & its Impact on Latin America

With fewer than 10 months until the U.S. presidential election, the Latin America Advisor sat down with Dan Erikson, managing director of Blue Star Strategies and a senior fellow at the Penn Biden Center, to talk about how the race is shaping up, which candidate proposals are the most relevant for Latin America and how U.S. policy toward the region could be affected.

PLAY

