

Nine dead in separate attacks amid escalating violence in Colombia

Image not found or type unknown



The government of Colombia's President Ivan Duque (C) has offered nearly \$800,000 for any information about an attack on a helicopter Duque was travelling in on Friday near the Venezuelan border [File: Colombia Presidency/Handout via Reuters]

Bogota, June 27 (RHC)-- At least nine people, including four police officers, have died in three separate attacks across Colombia, which has seen a recent surge in violence and instability in several parts of the country.

Three off-duty police officers died in an attack by armed men in the northeastern town of Pailitias, a police statement said on Sunday. One of the officers' pregnant wife was also injured.

A fourth police officer also died in "an incursion by an armed group" in a neighbourhood of the city of Cali in the southwest, said Mayor Jorge Ivan Ospina. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for any of the three attacks, though authorities often blame armed groups – including dissidents who rejected a 2016 peace deal between the government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels – for such violence.

The wave of attacks comes after a helicopter transporting President Ivan Duque and other government officials was shot at near Colombia's border with Venezuela on Friday. No one on board was injured, but photos released by Duque's office showed the tail and main blade had been hit. The government has offered a nearly \$800,000 reward for any information about who was responsible.

Earlier this month, car bomb explosions in a military base in the northeastern city of Cucuta – the same city Duque's helicopter was flying towards when it was fired upon – also injured 36 people.

Colombian observer group Indepaz says there have been 45 massacres – the killing of three or more people in a single event – so far this year. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said in a report in March that Colombia had seen a resurgence of violence last year, as well, as at least five conflicts with armed groups were ongoing. The ICRC said 389 people – mostly civilians – were killed by explosive devices last year, the highest number since 2016.

More than 27,000 people were displaced across Colombia in the first quarter of 2021, the country's human rights ombudsman said in April, a jump of 177 percent compared with the same period a year earlier.

The ombudsman said people were forced from their homes amid threats, murders, forced recruitment by armed gangs and clashes between armed groups.

Colombia has also seen regular anti-government protests since April, when a proposed tax reform that critics said would disproportionately harm the middle and working classes pushed thousands into the streets.

Demonstrators have since demanded government action to tackle poverty, inequities in healthcare and education and increasing violence across the country. Rights groups have raised concerns about police violence linked to those protests.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/index.php/en/noticias/internacionales/262043-nine-dead-in-separate-attacks-amid-escalating-violence-in-colombia>



Radio Habana Cuba