

HIGHLIGHTS

- Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Colombia speaks about disappearance.
- Arauca affected by conflict and natural disasters.
- ELN increases actions.

FIGURES

No. of people affected by access and mobility constraints. Oct 2015 (OCHA)	12,507
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No. of people affected by natural disasters. Oct. 2015 (UNGRD)	7,551
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FUNDING

US\$106,860,705 2015 humanitarian funding being implemented as of 20 Nov. 2015 (OCHA 4W)
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Corpomanigua - Hélpaga
CBPF Project in, Cartagena del Chairá, Cauquetá

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Colombia, a country of absences

Christoph Harnisch, Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Colombia

Early this year, Darío*, a 29-year-old farming day worker in Meta department, left for work and never returned. After a week with no news, Darío's mother, Mrs. Ana María*, reported his disappearance. November marks 300 days of Darío's absence, but she still has no idea what happened to her son.

Throughout Colombia, more than 70,000 people are reported missing, but not only due to armed conflict and violence. Each disappearance raises questions that should be asked: are they alive or dead? Why did they disappear? Where in the country are they? How to find them?

The humanitarian consequences of disappearance are countless: destroyed families, psychological trauma, stigmatization, and impoverishment. For these reasons, we have made this issue our priority in Colombia: in the past four years, we've supported 560 families in their search for their loved ones and provided 320 families with psychosocial support.

On 18 October, the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP announced from Havana a major advance within the framework of the peace negotiations: the commitment to search for, with ICRC support, all those disappeared due to the armed conflict. We applaud this effort and the political will it represents for both sides to give relief, in a humanitarian fashion, to the suffering of thousands of families awaiting news of their loved ones. Nonetheless, it opens a chapter to an immense job, which requires a firm will and coordinated efforts.

This is a task that we will carry out in an impartial and neutral manner, prioritizing, as always, the response to families of disappeared people. In an initial phase, we will receive and organize the information coming from the Government and FARC-EP, as well as victims' organizations, in coordination with the official forensic institute Instituto de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses. In addition, we will continue to provide support to family members who are part of the search process, and we will hand over remains in a dignified manner, with economic and psychosocial support.

We recognize the advance in the accords in Havana, but we are also aware that in no aspect will this task be easy. It is a task that will take many years, not only due to the sheer magnitude of disappearance in Colombia, but also due to the exhaustive processing and forensic techniques that are required to identify remains. Our experience in other countries has taught us that we need these efforts to be maintained over time and that society shows solidarity with families. Only in this way our hope will become an answer for those who are still awaiting their loved ones.

*Names changed to protect the identity of the victims.



Credit: Andrés Monroy/ICRC.
Christoph Harnisch, ICRC Chief of Delegation in Colombia, discusses forced disappearance and ICRC's role in supporting the FARC-EP and GoC's agreement on looking for people forcibly disappeared in the framework of the internal armed conflict.

Arauca, humanitarian scenario

Arauca department is located in eastern Colombia; four of its seven municipalities share a border with Venezuela. Due to its geographical characteristics, Arauca has soil with great potential for livestock grazing and oil exploration, with five major wells being exploited currently (Caño Limón, Giba, Caricare, Capachos and Caporal). Despite the region's potential for productivity, 36 per cent of the local population suffers from unsatisfied basic needs, rising to 64 per cent in rural areas.¹ These characteristics, combined with the gaps in State's response in structural terms, have facilitated the establishment of non-state armed groups for over four decades: particularly the ELN and FARC-EP guerrillas.

These guerrillas have exercised territorial control and military power, with serious humanitarian consequences for civilians. In addition, their actions frequently cross between Arauca and neighboring Venezuela. The armed capacity of these groups has often led to the co-opting of and influence over local authorities, including in representation to the House and Senate.² Until 2010, the department suffered from a major armed conflict between the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas, together with conflict against paramilitary groups, all competing for control over illicit coca crops and drug and arms trafficking. At the same time, Arauca became highly militarized in order to protect local oil infrastructure. In 2010, the confrontations between the two guerrillas groups ceased, leading to new dynamics that continue today. An "alliance" was created, including joint armed attacks against the military, as well as the creation of a *Social Manual*, which sets local community rules in social, economic, operational and military terms.

ELN, key conflict actor in Arauca

In Arauca, FARC-EP has respected unilateral ceasefires declared during the peace talks with the Government of Colombia. Nonetheless, since May, the ELN has increased its armed operations and measures of social control in order to maintain or expand territorial control. During the period there were at least 135 armed-violence events in the department, including: attacks against civilians,³ use of explosive remnants of war and armed actions.⁴ The ELN participated in 109 (83 per cent) of these events.

According to OCHA Monitor data, are three categories of events that intensified over the past six months (see Table 1).

Table 1: No. of armed-violence events in Arauca

	Prior FARC-EP ceasefire 1 May – 19 July, 2015		During ceasefire 20 July – 31 Oct, 2015		1 May – 31 Oct, 2015		
	ELN	FARC-EP	ELN	FARC-EP	ELN	FARC-EP	Total
Attacks against civilians	8	0	20	0	28	0	28
Use of explosive remnants of war	15	14	27	3	42	17	59
Armed actions	26	5	13	0	39	5	44
TOTAL	49	19	60	3	109	22	131

Source: OCHA-Monitor.

Map 1: No. of armed-violence events. May - Oct. 2015

¹ Departamento Nacional de Planeación. Ficha técnica departamento de Arauca, 2015.

² GUTIÉRREZ L., Omar Jaime. "Arauca: espacio, conflicto e institucionalidad", en: Análisis político nº 69, Bogotá, mayo-agosto, 2010: pags. 3-34.

³ Attacks against civilians includes: threats (individual/collective), forced disappearance, civilians injured/killed in armed actions, homicide of protected person, massacre, forced recruitment, sexual violence, etc.

⁴ Armed actions includes: combats, attacks against military infrastructure, blockages, etc.

Within the category of attacks against civilians, selective homicides are the most recurrent events including ELN participation. At least 16 were reported since May while only three occurred in the previous six months. These homicides, which are typically linked to non-compliance with the Social Manual, indicate the pressure of the social control strategy over civilians living in the area. There have also been frequent threats against political candidates, which is in line with historical efforts at coercion by non-state armed groups and efforts to co-opt local administrations. At the same time, there has been a re-emergence of ELN-related incidents with explosive remnants of war. Arms contamination in several areas in the department, including primary schools, restricts the civilian's movement and their access to basic goods and services.

Fragility of local institutions makes durable solutions difficult

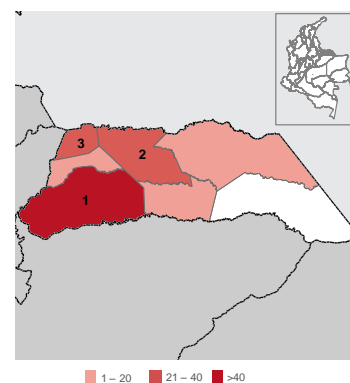
Apart from the armed conflict, other dynamics have increased the vulnerability of local people. Among these, the fragility of institutional presence should be highlighted, beyond a purely military presence designed to protect local oil infrastructure. This fragility has decreased local population's confidence in State institutions and their ability to act as guarantors of rights, including in cases of schools, hospitals, judicial centres. As a result, the population has sought the support of other actors for solutions. Due to the social, economic and military power of non-state armed groups, these groups have sometimes become the providers of the population's basic needs. Border dynamics are an example. Informal and illegal livelihoods, such as smuggling, are a quick source of income for local residents, and they finance non-state armed groups and other armed structures.

A border crisis with a multidimensional impact

Border dynamics affect local people in many ways. Cultural, economic and social factors have connected the residents of Arauca with neighbouring Venezuela. At least an estimated 3 per cent of the local population may be directly or indirectly living off informal cross-border trade.⁵

Since 19 August, the Government of Venezuela declared a State of Constitutional Exception and closed border crossings in neighboring Táchira state. These measures were expanded to 23 municipalities in Táchira, Zulia and Apure states, this last state bordering Arauca. Venezuelan measures included a closure of border crossings and more than 1,700 Colombians were recorded arriving from Venezuela in Arauca. They settled largely in shanty towns, marginalized neighbourhoods and makeshift shelters in Saravena, Arauquita and Arauca municipalities. They live in precarious conditions, with limited access to basic services and livelihoods. The border closures have also affected local residents who have lost their livelihoods, mainly related to informal commerce. The impossibility of carrying out these activities has been weakening already fragile structural conditions, particularly related to food security, employment access and sustainable livelihoods in the host community. Institutions have not been able to provide a sustained response to the situation. Taking into account the limited levels of local economic and industrial development, alternative incomes and formal job opportunities are almost non-existent.

These dimensions became evident in a recent MIRA needs evaluation by the Local Humanitarian Team in Saravena, Arauquita and Arauca municipalities. The evaluation allowed for the identification of urgent needs in early recovery, shelter, protection and health (see [MIRA report](#)). In mid-October the border situation was relatively under control



Municipality	No. events
Tame	41
Arauquita	31
Saravena	28
Fortul	18
Arauca	15
Puerto Rondón	2
Total	135

Source: OCHA-Monitor. Accessed on: 15 Nov. 2015.

⁵ According to field assessments.

in terms of new arrivals of returnees and deportees. However, analysts warn that the crisis may re-emerge during Venezuela's elections in December.

Natural disasters increase vulnerability

Arauca is highly vulnerable to natural disasters. A strong rainy season affected more than 33,000 people between January and October 2015, according to the disaster response unit UNGRD (Unidad Nacional para la Gestión del Riesgo de Desastres). This number represents a 174 per cent increase as compared with 12,105 people affected in the same period in 2014 (of whom 1,500 were affected by flooding). Many people affected by natural disasters have suffered a total or partial loss of their livelihoods. In some areas, the losses surpassed 80 per cent of crops, same communities that were simultaneously hit by the influx of returnees from Venezuela.

Challenges to the response

The current context in Arauca demands institutions to reinforce their capacities to guarantee access to rights and the satisfaction of basic needs, returning confidence to local residents by functioning as first responders.

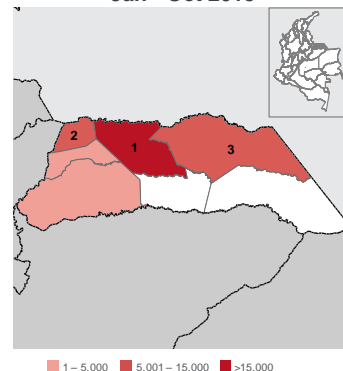
According to a recent response capacity study of the border crisis, there are clear budget gaps and overstretched operational and decision-making capacity in affected municipalities.

A medium-term vision includes the possibility of renewed dialogue with the ELN guerrillas, and a local institutional strengthening in order to respond to needs, thus passing from a citizen security to a human security concept.

The Local Humanitarian Team (LHT) works in a coordinated fashion with local institutions to strengthen their capacity and to support response to emergencies caused by disasters and conflict; and to respond to the humanitarian needs emerged due to the border crisis. The LHT is implementing coordinated actions in the sectors of health, protection, food security and WASH, increasing access to basic services for about 44,000 people in 2015.

Looking to a possible post-agreement phase, the LHT is incorporating in its agenda components of transition and development with a territorial approach, with a focus on the link between humanitarian assistance, early recovery and longer term solutions.

Map 2: No. of people affected by natural disasters in Arauca Jan - Oct 2015



Municipality	No. people
Arauquita	15,537
Saravena	9,828
Arauca	6,461
Fortul	1,250
Tame	120
Total	33,196

Source: UNGRD.

ELN increases actions

On 26 October, ELN guerrillas carried out one of the most serious attacks of the last several years. In a remote indigenous community in Güicán (Boyacá), located two days by horseback from the closest town, ELN guerrillas attacked a group of soldiers guarding election workers. Eleven soldiers and one policeman were killed, and two soldiers were taken in ELN custody. During the attack, the local communications infrastructure was destroyed, cutting off the community. The attack did not directly impact civilians. The Ombudsman's Office arrived in the area, which has precarious access to basic services and no access roads.

Some analysts and Government officials considered this event to be a warning to reconsider the possibility of peace talks with the guerrilla group, which is likely using these types of attacks to pressure a formal launch of peace talks. Other sectors recognize this event as a new dynamic of the conflict, which will not likely impact the prospects of peace talks.

Through public communiqués, the ELN claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that “since there is no accord on changes to the dynamics of the conflict, these actions will continue to occur...”, making reference to the intentions of the Government of Colombia to initiate peace talks with this group, even in the midst of conflict.

ELN increases its attacks as compared to 2014

The increasing impact of ELN actions is not a new area of concern for the humanitarian community in Colombia. According to Monitor data, thus far in 2015, the number of violent acts with ELN participation increased 6 per cent as compared with the same period last year (including armed actions, attacks against civilians and attacks on illicit objects). Between January and October 2014, ELN participated in an estimated 12 per cent of these actions. In 2015, the proportion rose to 15 per cent. In 2014, 81 per cent of the actions of this non-state armed group were focused in Arauca, Norte de Santander and Chocó, while thus far in 2015, the majority of actions are concentrated in a wider area in Arauca, Norte de Santander, Chocó, Antioquia and Boyacá. In Antioquia, the incidence of this group has increased markedly, rising from three to 19 actions (see Map 3).

By type of event reported in Monitor with ELN participation, the guerrilla group appears to have a strategy in some areas. As in 2014, thus far in 2015 there were frequent confrontations with the military and other armed groups – particularly post-demobilization armed groups (PDAGs), attacks on military, police and civilian infrastructure, blockades of roads and illegal checkpoints. Nonetheless, it is notable that there is a 147 per cent increase of armed confrontations. This could indicate that, as was noted for Antioquia and Chocó, this group and others with interests in the area (due to them serving as strategic corridors for narcotrafficking and to grow coca crops), are disputing territorial control in areas where the FARC-EP is reducing its military presence. It is important to maintain careful monitoring and early warning due to potential humanitarian impact on civilians.

Mass displacement and movement limitations, main humanitarian consequences

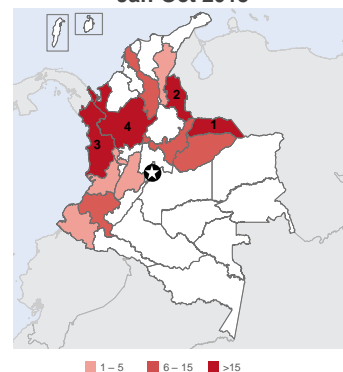
The current dynamic of the ELN has humanitarian consequences in several regions of the country. Some consequences are more evident, such as mass displacement, but others are more difficult to monitor, such as selective homicides and social control.

The ELN participated in 12 mass displacement events between January and October. A total of 4,236 people were displaced, making up more than a third of all mass displacements. The majority of these events occurred due to confrontations between the ELN and the armed forces, or with PDAGs, particularly in rural areas of Chocó, Antioquia, Norte de Santander and Arauca.

So far this year, OCHA has received information on at least 23 movement restriction-related situations, or limitations of access to basic goods and services, related to ELN-participating events. Not all cases have had estimates for the number of affected, but nearly 115,000 people are estimated to have suffered from these limitations. Out of this total, in April 2015, nearly 100,000 residents in Arauca were seriously impacted in terms of potable water and livelihood access for more than a week due to attacks on oil infrastructure, which contaminated the main water resources in the area.

Since late September, in Chocó more than 3,100 indigenous and Afro-colombians suffer serious movement limitations and limitations on their access to livelihoods and health

Map 3: No. of armed-violence events by ELN Jan-Oct 2015



Department	No. of events
Arauca	89
Norte de Santander	35
Chocó	26
Antioquia	19
Boyacá	12
Other	38
Total	219

Source: OCHA-Monitor. Accessed on: 15 Nov. 2015.

care, due to the consequences of the presence and confrontations between ELN, PDAGs, Autodefensas Gaitanistas, FARC-EP and the military (see [OCHA Factsheet](#)). This scenario reflects the complexity of the current context in some regions, where there is a confluence of economic, mining and political interests, which leads to territorial control disputes. These dynamics could occur in other areas.

This article is contributed by
JIPS

International mission strengthens information management for displaced people

A mission from the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS) arrived in Colombia to support the IDP Unit, the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV), to review IDP profiling processes based on Decree 2569 of December 2014. This decree stipulates the criteria and procedures for emergency humanitarian assistance delivery, based on evaluations of minimum subsistence.

To better understand minimum subsistence standard and overcoming vulnerability situations, accompaniment was carried out to people who have lived conflict-induced displacement, to analyze the implementation of comprehensive attention that guarantees their rights.

JIPS is a technical service that seeks to support Governments and other actors in order to improve available information on internal displacement, using a neutral and collaborative focus. This brings available objective information to carry out actions and policies in favour of IDPs.

The joint work between JIPS/UNHCR and UARIV began in Colombia in October 2015. As part of its support and monitoring activities, JIPS carries out weekly meetings with representatives from eight technical sections within UARIV and with other actors carrying out work with IDPs, which have complementary information to that used by UARIV, including UNHCR, OCHA, ICRC, the Ministry of the Interior and SISBEN.

The key initial recommendations of the mission focused on: 1. the importance of reinforcing territorial alliances with Mayor's offices and other local institutions working with IDPs, 2. to complement data collection and tool harmonization for characterization with other techniques, including qualitative, visual and anthropological. These techniques allow for the understanding of differential realities in each ethnic community, by age group and among those with disabilities, in order to reach populations that are not typical profiles of IDPs.

By mid-December, JIPS will present its conclusions from the first phase, and it will formulate medium-term objectives for a possible second phase in 2016 and 2017. This would focus on consolidating alliances with Colombian and international entities in order to better articulate IDP aid; documenting and highlighting lessons learned in profiling; articulating between different Government levels; and identifying gaps that need future attention and efforts.

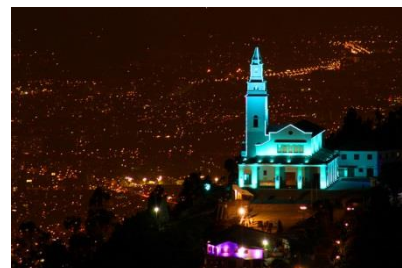
For more information visit www.jips.org

Colombia celebrates UN's seventieth anniversary

On 24 October, the UN's seventieth anniversary was an opportunity to reflect on the organization's history and formulate a balance of its most long-lasting achievements. It was also a time to reflect on the UN's work in Colombia, the key principles that guide its work and how the UN must adapt to meet current challenges.

"Over the past two and a half years that I have been in Colombia, I have seen many examples of the extraordinary joint work with concrete results for those who suffer from the absence of peace and development," said Fabrizio Hochschild, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Colombia.

As part of this celebration, the Colombian capital officially launched the exposition "70 years of the UN". The exhibition consists of an historic tour that starts with Colombia's signing of the United Nations Charter in 1945, up to the current participation of the United Nations system in the Havana peace talks and attending to Colombo-Venezuelan border crisis. A short documentary shows a selection of the most emblematic and significant photos of the UN's work in the country, as well as historic moments where Colombia showed contributions as a Member State and founder of the UN. (see [communiqué](#))



Credit: UNIC Colombia. Bogotá joined the 'Turn the World UN Blue' Campaign that lit up the most emblematic locations across the world. Bogotá, Colombia, October 2015.



Credit: UNIC Colombia. Photo exhibition "70 years of the UN". Bogotá, Colombia, October 2015.

In brief

Colombia-Venezuelan border emergency stabilizes

As of late October, the emergency at the border with Venezuela resulted in 2,009 Colombians deported and 22,655 who returned since 19 August. In Cúcuta and Villa del Rosario (Norte de Santander), where the majority of those affected were concentrated, an estimated 6,100 people passed through formal shelter. Thousands of others stayed with families and friends, or in makeshift shelters, with limited access to aid and social programmes. The formal shelters were gradually closed and the UNGRD distributed rental subsidies to families with continuing shelter needs. The last remaining shelter open as of the end of October had 66 people.

The peak of the emergency is past, but members of local humanitarian teams and local institutions continue to help affected people as part of the border crisis response. UNDP and organizations engaged in early recovery projects are providing technical aid to the authorities and supporting livelihood recoveries, production projects and employment generation.

The following link contains all products related to this emergency: <http://bit.ly/1NsrtDv>

El Niño alert continues, Pacific and Caribbean coast flooding

The Ministry of the Environment announced that the effects of El Niño could extend through the second semester of 2016, again calling for preparation measures. Thanks to response-and-contingency actions implemented by national and local authorities since early November, the number of municipalities with water shortages fell from 295 to 155. In addition, mitigation measures and sporadic rainfall extinguished forest fires, which had increased throughout October.

Meanwhile, as part of the meteorological anomalies of El Niño, heavy rains affected the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Two conflict-affected areas were also seriously affected by flooding: In Montecristo (Bolívar) more than 7,000 people were affected and in Guapi y Timbiquí (Cauca) more than 35,000 people were affected. In Guapi, some people suffered serious damage to their homes and took temporary refuge in a shelter inaugurated just days before, built by NRC with country-based pooled fund funding, in collaboration with UARIV and local authorities. (See Stories from the field).

Stories from the field

Guapi prepared for emergencies

By NRC Colombia



Follow this link for full story:

<http://bit.ly/1MxJijy>

For more information, please contact OCHA Colombia: salahumanitaria@un.org Tel. +571 6221100

For media enquiries, please contact Chiara Capozio, Humanitarian Affairs Officer: capozio@un.org Tel. +571 6221100 Ext. 1111.

OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at: www.salahumanitaria.co | www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int

All the information reflected in this report has been processed by OCHA from official and secondary sources. Data for mass displacement and protection of civilians has been processed by OCHA Colombia through the Integrated Humanitarian Information System. Sources: Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (UARIV); Dirección para la Acción Integral Contra Minas Antipersonal (DAIMCA); Sistema Integrado de Información Humanitaria (SIDIH/Monitor).