

### OVERVIEW

In 2016, the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) signed a peace agreement. While the demobilisation of the FARC-EP was seen as a first step towards pacifying many regions of Colombia, armed groups continued and even escalated the violent attacks in several regions, including the Cauca department.

In Cauca, some armed groups remained in the territory, while others were formed after the signing of the peace agreement; additional groups entered the region to occupy territories abandoned by the FARC-EP. Confrontations among these groups have resulted in forced displacement, confinement of local populations to their homes, and limited access for humanitarian workers. These armed groups have also attacked civilians – especially human rights defenders and indigenous and Afro-descendant leaders.

### ABOUT THIS REPORT

**Aim:** This report aims to provide elements for understanding violence in the Cauca department after the demobilisation of the FARC-EP and the humanitarian consequences of the new dynamics of the conflict.

**Methodology:** The analysis is based on a review of information from humanitarian organisations working in Cauca, databases of Colombian Government institutions responsible for monitoring the armed conflict, reports from think tanks, and interviews with academics studying the dynamics of the armed conflict in Colombia and the Pacific region (where the department of Cauca is located).

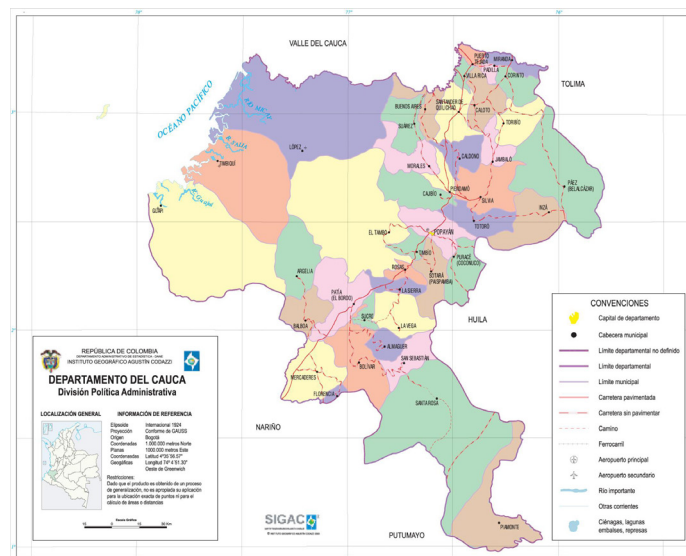
**Limitations:** As this is a department-wide analysis, the report may overlook some local dynamics that merit detailed assessment. The north and south of Cauca do not necessarily have the same conflict dynamics. Visits to the department could also highlight effects that the data does not necessarily capture, such as threats and armed groups' rules for a community. Visits might also provide a better mapping of humanitarian organisations in the territory.

### KEY FINDINGS

The demobilisation of the FARC-EP did not end armed violence in Cauca. Several armed groups continue to operate, and new groups have appeared. In Cauca, as incentives for the continued existence of armed groups remain in place – including illegal mining and areas for the cultivation, processing, and transport of coca and marijuana – these groups have entered into confrontation to take over these resources.

Civilians are affected by these confrontations through displacement, confinement to their homes, and even death by armed groups in order to preserve territorial control. Human rights defenders and farmer, Afro-descendant, and indigenous leaders are at particular risk of being killed or displaced because of their visibility within communities and their rejection of the actions of armed groups.

MAP 1. Geographical location of the Cauca department



Source: Sigac (2017), see full map on page 8

5,527

PEOPLE DISPLACED  
BETWEEN JANUARY-  
APRIL 2021

497

PEOPLE FORCIBLY  
CONFINED BY ARMED  
GROUPS BETWEEN  
JANUARY-APRIL 2021

271

SOCIAL LEADERS  
KILLED SINCE 2016

50.9%

OF SOCIAL  
LEADERS KILLED WERE  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

## CONFLICT OVERVIEW

### Background

The Cauca department, located on the Pacific coast in southwestern Colombia, has been a theatre for armed conflict since the 1960s. At that time, land conflicts arising from the expansion of large landholdings escalated, and left-wing armed groups based in the centre of the country – including the FARC-EP and the Popular Liberation Army – expanded into the Pacific region. This intrusion triggered a response from local self-defence groups. Several armed groups established themselves in Cauca, leading to territorial disputes among left-wing armed groups, self-defence groups, and the Colombian army (Verdad Abierta 15/01/2014; Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 09/2012). Between 1985–2020, armed conflicts displaced more than 412,000 people in the Cauca department. Between 1990–2000, more than 609 people were victims of landmines and unexploded ordnance. Of the landmine victims, 45% were civilians, with 12.6% being members of indigenous communities (OCHA and UNCT Colombia 14/05/2021; MSF 01/06/2021).

### Post-conflict violence

Between 2012 (when the peace negotiations started) and 2020, there were at least 1,457 cases of attacks against the civilian population<sup>1</sup> and 433 civilian homicides in the region. Of these, 72% (1,050) and 79% (345), respectively, occurred in 2016 after the signing of the peace agreement (OCHA and UNCT Colombia 14/05/2021; MSF 01/06/2021). The total number of homicides grew from 470 in 2013 to 792 in 2020, despite a national reduction in cases caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Colombian National Police 04/01/2021).

### Drivers of violence

In Cauca, armed groups are fighting for control of natural resources and illicit economies. They also seek to exert territorial control and establish armed orders that allow them to extort money from and regulate the behaviour of local civilians (Valencia and Albarracín 04/12/2020). Armed groups are also fighting over coca cultivation areas. Between 2013–2019, the number of hectares planted with coca grew from an estimated 3,326 hectares to 17,355 hectares – an increase of approximately 421% (Colombian Drugs Observatory 31/12/2019). This represents 11% of the total hectares planted with coca in Colombia. Armed groups are also fighting over alluvial gold mining (2,697 hectares, equivalent to 3% of the national total) and the areas where marijuana is planted (Cauca has more hectares of marijuana planted than any other

department) (UNODC 10/2020; Colombian Drugs Observatory 2017; openDemocracy 13/08/2019; El Tiempo 15/03/2021). Cauca is an arms and drug trafficking corridor because it connects the departments of Cauca, Tolima, and Valle del Cauca to central Colombia and acts as the export point for cocaine hydrochloride and marijuana (El Tiempo 26/04/2021). Armed groups are fighting to control this zone in order to commandeer illegal resources and wield strategic control of the territory and its inhabitants.

**MAP 2. Municipalities in the strategic drug-trafficking corridor in Cauca (2019)**



Source: El País (03/11/2019)

<sup>1</sup> An attack against the civilian population is any event in which an armed group does not distinguish between combatants and civilians (OCHA 11/03/2013).

## Armed groups present in the Cauca department

**At least seven armed groups are active in Cauca:** five groups that split from FARC-EP (frente Carlos Patiño, columna móvil Dagoberto Ramos, columna móvil Jaime Martínez, frente 30 Rafael Aguilera, and Segunda Marquetalia), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the Gaitanista Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC) (El País 25/04/2021; Fundación CORE 26/07/2021).

The ELN and columna móvil Dagoberto Ramos are active in the north of Cauca; columna móvil Jaime Martínez is active in the municipalities of Morales and Cajibío and on the coast of the Naya River; frente 30 Rafael Aguilera is active in the northwest; and frente Carlos Patiño is fighting the ELN in the south, specifically in the municipalities of Argelia and El Tambo (La Silla Vacía 18/11/2018; La Silla Vacía 20/08/2020; La Silla Vacía 31/03/2021; Fundación CORE 26/07/2021). In early 2020, the Segunda Marquetalia armed group arrived in the municipality of Patía and other municipalities on the coast of the Naya River, in the centre-west and north of the department, after failing to reach agreements with the other FARC-EP factions (El Tiempo 25/10/2020; La Silla Vacía 24/08/2020). AGC are active in the south of the department but do not maintain an extensive presence; they operate mainly in the department of Nariño and occasionally move up to Cauca (W Radio 30/04/2020). Besides the nonstate armed groups, the Colombian National Army is present in Cauca and has clashed with all of the aforementioned armed groups.

## Multiethnic and multicultural department

Cauca is a multiethnic and multicultural department that includes well-organised Afro-Colombian, indigenous, and farmer communities. Armed groups have systematically attacked these communities, seeking to disrupt their traditions, uses, and customs and aggravate their struggle for the right to free and dignified land ownership (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 16/03/2021).

## ANTICIPATED SCOPE AND SCALE

Confrontation between armed groups in Cauca is likely to continue in the second half of 2021. In the municipality of Piamonte, in the south of the department, the arrival of the AGC – a result of the confrontations in the north of Nariño department – could exacerbate the violence. In the north of Cauca, frente Carlos Patiño and the ELN will likely continue to engage in heavy fighting, resulting in confinements, forced displacements, and landmine explosions. Some armed groups have also threatened indigenous communities, putting

them at greater risk of violence (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 16/03/2021 and 07/01/2021). Between January–June 2021, there were 363 homicides in Cauca – an increase of 9% from the 333 homicides recorded in 2020 (Colombian National Police 06/05/2021 and 04/01/2021). Massacres<sup>2</sup> have also increased since the signing of the peace agreement. There were 14 massacres in Cauca in 2020; as at 27 July 2021, there were 11 massacres (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 26/04/2021; Indepaz 22/07/2021).

## CRISIS IMPACT

**Protection:** Since the peace agreement was signed, armed groups have killed 345 civilians, and 1,050 attacks against the civilian population have been recorded (OCHA and UNCT Colombia 14/05/2021; MSF 01/06/2021).

In the first quarter of 2021, Cauca was third among Colombian departments most affected by forced displacement. During this time, eight mass displacements<sup>3</sup> occurred, affecting 1,397 families (approximately 3,600 individuals) in the municipalities of Argelia, Caloto, Corinto, El Tambo, Guapi, and Timbiquí. Argelia was the most affected municipality, with 2,185 displaced people (Ombudsman's office of Colombia 26/4/2021). By April, this figure reached 5,527 displaced people (OCHA 07/04/2021). During 2019, a total of 5,515 people were displaced in Cauca (Unidad para las Víctimas 01/01/2020; Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 31/03/2021).

After confrontations, unexploded devices often remain in rural areas, impeding mobility within those municipalities (W Radio 06/04/2021). Several civilians have stepped on landmines, with some being killed and others losing limbs (Noticias Caracol 18/04/2021; Noticias 1 20/11/2020). According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), during the first four months of 2021, explosive ordnance casualties in Colombia increased by 22% compared with the same period in 2020. The start of the year had the highest number of incidents since 2018. Cauca has the most landmine accidents of all departments (99 out of 195) (IFRC 08/07/2021). Landmines are laid by armed groups to restrict the mobility of their adversaries; the devices are often triggered by the people living in the area, as armed groups do not deactivate mines after the fighting.

Since the signing of the peace agreement with the FARC-EP in 2016, Cauca has the highest number of assassinations of human rights defenders in the country. While the department represents only 3% of the Colombian population, it accounts for 28% of the total number of assassinations of human rights defenders. In 2020, homicides of human rights defenders in the department increased by 40% (El Espectador 19/04/2021; Indepaz 04/05/2020).

<sup>2</sup> In this document, massacre is defined as the murder of three or more persons in the same event or in events related by authorship, place, and time, following the definition of the UNHCHR (09/03/2000).

<sup>3</sup> This report defines mass displacement as the forced displacement of more than 50 people, following the practice in Colombia for figures collected by humanitarian organisations and the national Government (OCHA 13/02/2013).

**Shelter and NFIs:** There have been several forced displacements in Cauca since 2017, but there are no permanent IDP shelters in the region. In September 2020, the Unidad para las Víctimas announced that a shelter would be built in the municipality of Argelia; it had not yet been built as at July 2021. As a result of the lack of shelters, displaced people often settle in makeshift shelters or stay with families, friends, or neighbours.

Since the beginning of 2020, individual and mass displacements have represented a major challenge for local authorities, who have found it difficult to provide shelter, especially in cases of mass displacement (France24 29/03/2021). Many displaced people end up in makeshift shelters and lack food and cooking utensils, blankets, and other NFIs. While the Colombian Government has provided kits for the displaced in some cases, local government officials say that this is insufficient, as displaced people have remained in makeshift shelters and supplies ran out when people were unable to return to their homes (Unidad para las Víctimas 03/12/2020; Radio Nacional de Colombia 28/03/2021).

Between January–April 2021, there were more than 2,700 displaced people in Cauca, and nearly 100 homes and commercial establishments were destroyed by the violence (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 31/03/2021; RCN Radio 01/04/2021).

**WASH:** Some shelters built for the displaced do not have basic sanitary facilities, resulting in insufficient latrines for IDPs (RCN Radio 01/04/2021). In Argelia (one of the municipalities with the largest IDP populations), affected families do not have access to safe drinking water, putting them at risk of waterborne diseases. Displaced women also need hygiene kits for menstruation (El Espectador 07/04/2021).

**Health:** Most municipalities hosting IDPs only have one hospital. These hospitals typically do not have the capacity to serve both IDPs and the local population. IDPs with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, and asthma, have difficulty accessing their required medicine, as the hospitals do not carry the necessary drugs. Shelters often lack healthcare services, including nurses and physicians who can treat displaced people. Medicine for children and the elderly also tend to be in short supply (Colombia 2020 06/04/2021). Shelters are often overcrowded, which makes it difficult to maintain the physical distance necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some municipalities in Cauca have reported high hospital occupancy because of the pandemic, and an outbreak of infections in IDP shelters could result in further restrictions on medical care for IDPs (Diario Occidente 06/07/2021). IDPs also need pandemic kits, including hand sanitisers, masks, and cleaning alcohol (OCHA and UNCT Colombia 14/05/2021; MSF 01/06/2021).

## SPECIFIC GROUPS SUBJECT TO VIOLENCE

**Indigenous people at risk of violence:** Cauca is home to more than 248,000 indigenous people, representing 19.6% of the department's total population. There are 84 established reservations of eight indigenous communities: Nasa-Páez, Guambiano-Yanaconas, Coconucos, Espiratas-Siapiraras (Emberas), Totoroes, Inganos, and Guanacos (CRIC accessed 04/08/2021).

At various times during the armed conflict since the 1960s, indigenous people in Cauca have confronted – with and without the use of violence – and expelled armed groups and Colombian forces of the Colombian state from their territories (Hernández 06/2006). As a result, the indigenous population has been subjected to multiple forms of violence, including forced displacement, targeted assassinations, and forced disappearances. Between 1985–2020, more than 64,000 people identifying as indigenous in Cauca registered as victims<sup>4</sup> of the conflict with the Unidad para las Víctimas, the Colombian office in charge of keeping this registry.

Between 2017–2020, more than 3,100 indigenous people in Cauca were forcibly displaced, 747 received death threats, 116 were wounded as a result of the fighting, and 71 were killed by armed groups. About 50.9% of the human rights defenders killed in the region between 2016–2021 were indigenous. Some armed groups have attacked indigenous guards because they do not recognise their legitimacy in the territories (La Silla Vacía 30/11/2020; France24 06/12/2020).

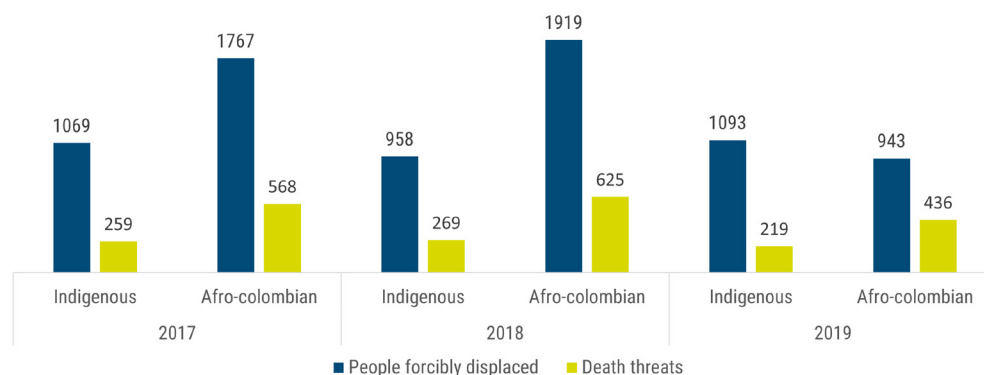
**Afro-Colombians at risk of violence:** Approximately 20% of the population in Cauca (more than 250,000 people) identifies as Afro-Colombian. In some municipalities, the proportion of the Afro-descendant population is as high as 48% (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 08/05/2020).

Like the indigenous population, the Afro-Colombian population in Cauca has confronted and expelled armed groups from its territories since the 1960s. The Afro-Colombian communities collectively administer certain territories that are legally recognised by the Colombian State called Consejos Comunitarios Afrocolombianos (Afro-Colombian Community Councils). Community council leaders often denounce the illegal mining of minerals – in many cases, financed and exploited by armed groups – because people who make a living from artisanal mining in their villages (usually Afro-Colombians) are subject to extortion (Unidad para las Víctimas 19/05/2017; HRW 10/02/2021).

<sup>4</sup> In Colombia, people affected by the conflict can be recognised as "victims" and register with the Unidad para las Víctimas, an office of the Colombian State.

Since 2017, more than 2,480 Afro-Colombians in Cauca have been forcibly displaced, 1,629 have received death threats, and 46 have been kidnapped. Since the signing of the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, 6,551 Afro-Colombians from Cauca have registered as victims of the armed conflict with the Unidad para las Víctimas, representing 22% of the total number of victims during this period (Colombia 2020 06/04/2021; Unidad para las Víctimas 19/05/2017; Unidad para las Víctimas 2021).

**FIGURE 1. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian people forcibly displaced or threatened with death (2017–2019)**



Source: Unidad para las Víctimas (01/01/2020)

**Farmers at risk of expulsion and pressured to cultivate coca:** Almost half of the population of Cauca (48.7%) identifies as farmers (DANE 01/08/2020). Historically, farmers in Cauca have sought legal recognition by the Colombian State so that they can be assigned areas to work their land freely. Many of them do not have formal titles to their land; without legal recognition of their status as farmers, they are in a state of legal insecurity. Recognition as farmers reduces the cost of land titling procedures. The lack of formal titles to their land leaves farmers at risk of being dispossessed, and many have few legal tools to prove ownership (Verdad Abierta 19/05/2014).

Farmers are at risk of violence because of land disputes within the department. Armed groups often intimidate farmers, and many farmers claiming dispossessed land are killed. Armed groups also pressure many farmers to maintain coca cultivation; in 2019, this amounted to an estimated 17,355 hectares of coca planted, placing Cauca fourth among the departments for most hectares planted (Colombian Drugs Observatory 01/08/21).

The National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS) was implemented as a result of the 2016 peace agreement. It sought to replace coca crops with legal crops through subsidies by the national Government and with technical support (Presidencia de la República de Colombia 29/05/2017). Armed groups have attempted to derail the PNIS by assassinating farmer leaders who have committed to voluntary substitution of illicit crops. Farmer leaders – especially those actively promoting PNIS – are often directly targeted and accounted for 26% of the human rights defenders killed between 2016–2020 (El Espectador 07/04/2021).

**Children and young adults at risk of forced recruitment:** The signing of the peace agreement by the Government and the FARC-EP was expected to reduce the number of minors (i.e. younger than 18) forcibly recruited by armed groups. While that reduction did not materialise, the figures remained at similar levels until 2020 – a year that saw a 113% increase from 2019 countrywide (El Espectador 07/04/2021). This increase was caused in part by school closures and the economic and social fallout as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Save the Children 02/10/2020; The New Humanitarian 10/09/2020). Substantial underreporting of cases is likely, as people often do not report recruitment for fear of reprisals or because the child's salary supports the family. A total of 300 cases of forced recruitment of minors have been registered in Colombia since the signing of the peace agreement (El Tiempo 17/03/2021). Cauca is one of the five departments with the most cases of forced recruitment (El Espectador 17/05/2020; InSight Crime 01/04/2021).

In Cauca, competition incentivises armed groups to increase their membership in order to gain military advantage. While having children in their ranks can also prevent actions by law enforcement, there have been cases of bombings or fighting in which the national army has killed minors who had been recruited by armed groups (El Espectador 22/06/2020; El Tiempo 07/11/2019). Colombian Minister of Defence Diego Molano justified the deaths of recruited minors by calling them 'war machines' and 'criminals' (BBC News 11/03/2021). Most of the cases reported in the department place the responsibility on FARC-EP dissenting groups, although all groups in Cauca use this practice (Pares 23/03/2021; InSight Crime 01/04/2021).

The closure of schools during the pandemic and the lack of internet connectivity for some families prevented many children from continuing their studies. Poverty affected 55.6% of the department's population in 2020, worsening the situation and putting many more children at risk of forced recruitment (La Liga Contra el Silencio 14/09/2020; DANE 29/04/2021). The increase in forced recruitment of minors during 2020 is very likely linked to the closure of schools in many rural areas (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 07/03/2020; UNHCR 28/07/2020; InSight Crime 03/09/2020).

**Ex-combatants of the FARC-EP at risk of recruitment and homicide:** Cauca is the Colombian department with the highest number of FARC-EP ex-combatants killed (43 between 2017–2020) (Colombia 2020 24/11/2020).

Ex-combatants are at risk of recruitment by FARC-EP factions. Other armed groups seek to recruit ex-combatants because of their military training and knowledge of the local terrain. Refusal to join can result in homicide (Valencia 15/02/2021; El País 03/06/2019). FARC-EP ex-combatants are also stigmatised as supporters of FARC-EP dissenting armed groups, putting them at risk of being attacked by other armed groups, such as the ELN and AGC (El Tiempo 05/02/2018; El Tiempo 09/03/2020). Former combatants may also be killed in retaliation for their actions in combat. After they lay down their arms, they sometimes become victims of revenge (Nussio and Hower 14/10/2014).

**Venezuelan migrants and refugees facing xenophobia:** There are 8,051 formally registered Venezuelan migrants in the department of Cauca. Although this is not a large number compared with other departments in Colombia, the ELN and FARC-EP factions often threaten Venezuelan immigrants with violence. Xenophobia and stigmatisation are also common (W Radio 25/11/2020). As a result of death threats from armed groups, at least 278 people from more than 80 families were displaced from Argelia's rural area towards the urban area of the municipality (El País 27/11/2020; El Nuevo Liberal 18/12/2020).

## AGGRAVATING FACTORS

**Conflict in the Pacific region:** Violence in Cauca is linked to its role as a drug trafficking corridor, the exploitation of mineral resources in the area, and the violence in the surrounding departments (Caquetá, Nariño, Putumayo, and Valle del Cauca). In the south of Cauca, the escalation of violence between FARC-EP dissenting groups and AGC has caused the latter to move into the municipalities of Piamonte and Santa Rosa to escape confrontation (W Radio 30/04/2020). The situation is similar in the north of the department, where Cauca shares borders with the Valle del Cauca department. FARC-EP dissenting group Jaime Martínez is present in the municipality of Jamundí, in the south of Valle del Cauca. Jamundí is a strategic territory because it acts as the entrance and exit to the Naya corridor, where coca is planted, processed, and transported to Buenaventura, the port of exit to the Pacific Ocean (La Silla Vacía 16/04/2021). Because coca is grown in Cauca and transported out on the Pacific Ocean from Valle del Cauca, the escalation of violence in Valle del Cauca also affects the municipalities of northern Cauca.

**Poverty:** The department of Cauca has one of the highest incidences of monetary poverty in Colombia. In 2020, more than 55% of its population suffered from monetary poverty, and more than 23% suffered from extreme monetary poverty (DANE 29/04/2021). In 2018, 18% of the population of Cauca had unsatisfied basic needs;<sup>5</sup> in rural areas, this figure reached 22% (DANE accessed 24/07/2021). In contexts of armed conflict, poverty increases the risk of forced recruitment by armed groups (Hansen 05/10/2016). In Colombia, poor children are at greater risk of recruitment because it can be seen as an opportunity to earn income that would otherwise be unattainable for the family (Springer 18/08/2012). In Cauca, FARC-EP factions have taken advantage of the local poverty rates and school closures during the pandemic to increase their membership with indigenous people, farmers, and Afro-Colombian children and youth (Pares 23/03/2021; InSight Crime 01/04/2021; La Liga Contra el Silencio 14/09/2020).

**Food insecurity and nutrition:** The Cauca department is classified as one of the regions in Colombia facing food and nutrition insecurity. About 47.3% of the households on its Pacific coast are in this category (UN Women 09/2017). Approximately 79% of the population aged 2–64 years does not consume food that can provide the daily energy requirement. It is one of the departments with the highest proportion of children with low birth weight, indicating potential malnutrition (FAO and Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection 26/11/2013).

## HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

**Physical and security constraints:** In the rural areas of the municipalities of Argelia, Caldono, Santander de Quilichao, and Suárez, the medical facilities of municipalities and humanitarian organisations have been attacked by armed groups. When civilians are confined to their homes because of fighting or orders from armed groups, humanitarian workers have announced that no medical care is allowed for anyone; even those wounded in combat cannot go to hospitals, as medical workers have been threatened with death if they treat combatants (HRW 15/07/2020; El Tiempo 13/07/2021).

In 2020, there were 23 attacks on medical missions in Cauca – the highest number of attacks in the last 24 years. Between January–May 2021, there were 13 attacks against medical missions in Cauca (IFRC 14/03/2021 and 08/07/2021). Although not all attacks on medical missions are caused by the armed conflict, armed groups in Cauca have been responsible for several of them because they treat humanitarians as allies of their enemies (El País 14/02/2020; Government of Cauca 20/10/2020). In April 2021, medical staff in El Plateado of rural Argelia evacuated when members of an armed group entered the hospital, threatened medical staff, and removed and killed a man wounded in the fighting. Armed men took over the hospital for several hours (GIFMM and OCHA 06/04/2021).

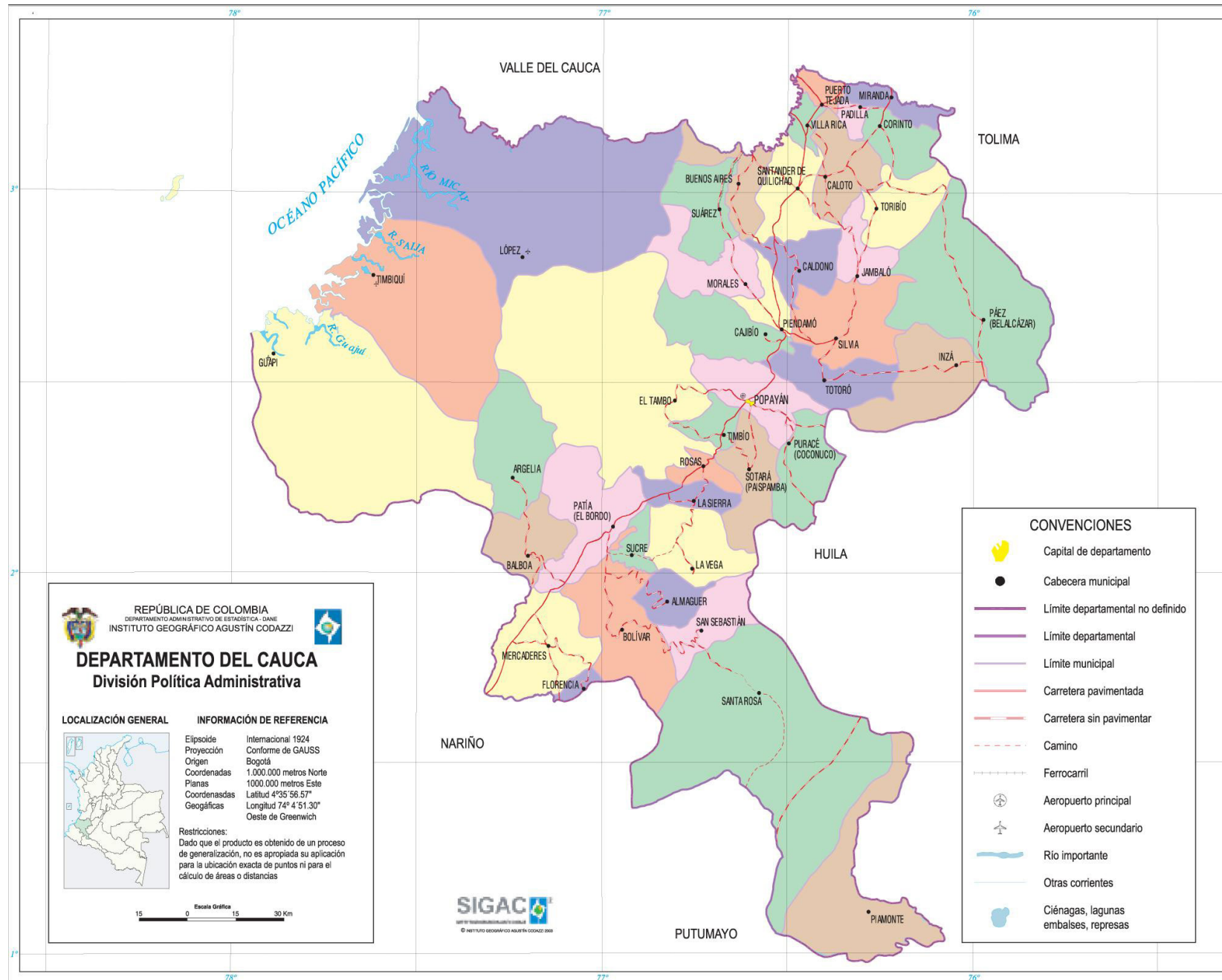
<sup>5</sup> In Colombia, unsatisfied basic needs are a way to measure poverty beyond income (as opposed to monetary poverty). Four areas are measured (housing, health services, basic education, and minimum income). According to the results, people are considered to have or not to have unsatisfied basic needs (OCHA 01/09/2012).

The presence of unexploded ordnance and mines on certain roads to rural areas of the Cauca municipalities also restricts access for humanitarian organisations (NRC 21/08/2019). Antipersonnel mines are planted in 41 of the department's 42 municipalities; 16 of these municipalities are considered high-risk because of the number of mines present (Noticias 1 20/11/2020).

**Access to aid among people in need:** Clashes between armed groups – mainly in the municipalities of Argelia, Guapi, and Timbiquí – continued with greater intensity during the first months of 2021 (OCHA 07/04/2021). During these clashes, noncombatant residents are often confined to their homes. Confinements are seen as restrictions on the mobility of people within a territory because of the presence of armed groups. These confinements in Colombia have increased since 2020 (OCHA 07/04/2021; OCHA 25/04/2021). In Cauca, 497 people were restricted in their mobility by the presence of armed groups during the first three months of 2021 (IACHR 27/04/2021). During periods of confinement, people cannot access their livelihoods, and their ability to reach out to humanitarian organisations is restricted.

**Humanitarian access to affected populations:** The inability to move within territories during times of escalating violence makes it difficult for humanitarian organisations to access people in need (OCHA 07/04/2021; UNHCR 01/2021; Human Rights Watch 15/07/2020). Armed groups often set up blockades in which they decide who can enter certain territories. When fighting is underway, these armed groups sometimes prevent members of humanitarian organisations from entering, as they are considered allies of their enemies. Some humanitarian missions have even been attacked during these blockades (Government of Cauca 20/10/2020).

# MAP: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE CAUCA DEPARTMENT



Source: Sigac (2017)