

# Chronology

## The birth of the Colombian state

The colonization of present-day Colombia begins in 1525, following earlier contacts with the Spanish colonizers from 1508. Declarations of independence from Spain made in 1810 are followed by re-conquests, before Simón Bolívar leads the final defeat of Spain in 1819. The new nation of Gran Colombia is formed (present day Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama and Colombia), but in 1830 the country divides, with Colombia and Panama constituting Nueva Granada in 1832. Following various changes of name and organization, it changes its name to Colombia following the reforms of 1886. Panama becomes an independent country in 1903.

## Political evolution

The Conservative and Liberal Parties publish their first political programmes in 1848 and 1849 respectively. Following several bi-partisan wars between their supporters during the nineteenth Century, the bloody War of a Thousand Days (1899-1901) leaves an estimated 100,000 people dead. The Conservatives dominate Colombian politics from 1885 until 1930.

## La Violencia (1948-1957)

The assassination of radical Liberal presidential aspirant Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 triggers *el Bogotazo*, a popular uprising in the capital and other regions. The Conservative party responds with a policy of general repression, resulting in the spreading of violent incidents throughout the country. The period later becomes known as *La Violencia*, during which an estimated 200,000 people die.

General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla leads a coup in 1953 against the ultra-right Conservative government. Colombia's only period of military rule lasts until 1957 when a civil resistance movement encourages the armed forces to ask Rojas to step down. In a referendum in December, voters endorse the traditional parties' power-sharing scheme, the National Front.

## The National Front and the emergence of the guerrilla groups (1958-1978)

### 1958

Alberto Lleras Camargo takes office as the first National Front President.

## 1964

The ELN establishes its first guerrilla centre in southern Santander. The army attacks *campesino* self-defence groups close to the communist party in Marquetalia, Pato, Riochiquito and Guayabero. The attacks lead the groups to form mobile guerrilla forces, creating the group Bloque Sur, the origin of the FARC.

## 1966

The FARC is officially formed in the second conference of the Bloque Sur.

## 1967

The EPL is formally founded.

## 1970

The National Front system begins to break down after farcical elections where many believe ANAPO leader General Rojas Pinilla won but was officially declared to have come second.

## 1972

The 19 April Movement (M-19) is founded.

## 1973

The ELN is all but destroyed after 33,000 government troops move into the region of Anorí, Antioquia.

## Turbay and the failure of the repressive model (1978-1982)

## 1978

Julio César Turbay Ayala is elected President. The Security Statute is passed, allowing the armed forces to arrest and prosecute people in military courts. Many accusations of torture are made against the army.

## 1979

The M-19 steals more than 5,000 weapons from the Canton North army battalion in Bogotá. A subsequent wave of repression results in the imprisonment of members of the M-19, other guerrilla groups and political and social activists.

## 1980

An M-19 commando storms and takes over the Embassy of the Dominican Republic, leading to negotiations between the government and guerrillas on the release of the diplomatic corps. It is the first negotiation between the government and the guerrillas since *La Violencia*.

## 1981

President Turbay appoints a Peace Commission, chaired by former president Carlos Lleras Restrepo.

## 1982

In Puerto Boyacá, local politicians, military, businessmen, ranchers and drug-traffickers form Death to Kidnappers (MAS) to wipe out local guerrillas and tackle kidnapping.

## Betancur opens the door to negotiations (1982-1986)

## 1982

President Belisario Betancur establishes an all-party peace commission to begin talks with political forces and guerrilla groups. In December, the government passes an amnesty law that does not require disarmament.

## 1983

The Peace Commission starts its contacts with the FARC in La Uribe in January. In October, President Betancur meets with M19 guerrilla leaders in Spain. The FARC Central Command decides to proceed with its military expansion and create a popular army with the aim of taking power within eight years.

## 1984

Comando Quintín Lame begins operations, rooted in indigenous resistance dynamics. A bilateral ceasefire agreement is signed at La Uribe on 28 March between the government Peace Commission and the FARC. The M-19, EPL, the Workers Self-Defence Group (ADO) and the ELN splinter fronts 'Simón Bolívar' and 'Antonio Narino' sign a ceasefire agreement with the Commission for Peace, Dialogue and Verification. Two other ELN factions do the same the following year. The army attacks the M-19 at Yarumales and fighting lasts 26 days.

## 1985

The national dialogue concludes in February, without much success. The FARC creates a political party, the Patriotic Union (UP), in March to participate in elections without abandoning guerrilla warfare. In June, the M-19 creates 'camps of peace and democracy' in various cities, particularly attracting young people from working class districts. This alarms business and political leaders and the camps are banned. The following month, after the assassination of an EPL commander, the M-19 and the EPL declare the ceasefire over. In November the M-19 takes hostage several magistrates in a bloody siege of the Palace of Justice. The army responds by bombarding it and 95 people are killed.

## Finding a partial model for negotiating (1986-1991)

### 1986

The FARC signs a new agreement with the Peace Commission, extending the 1984 ceasefire agreement. President Virgilio Barco takes office and creates the Council for Reconciliation, Normalization and Rehabilitation.

### 1987

The M-19 proposes the renewal of talks and the joint demilitarization of reserves and indigenous zones in Cauca. The Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) is formed with the participation of all the guerrilla groups.

### 1988

The M-19 announces a six-month ceasefire in January, but kidnaps Conservative leader Álvaro Gómez Hurtado in May. A political summit is held in Usaquén in July to resolve the situation, where the Commission for Democratic Coexistence is created to present a peace proposal to the government. President Barco presents his 'Peace Initiative' in September, and in December announces that the government will begin negotiations with the M-19.

### 1989

#### January

M-19 leader Carlos Pizarro and Commissioner for Peace Rafael Pardo begin negotiations in Tolima.

#### April

As part of the peace process with the M-19, Analysis and Consensus Working Groups are set up to develop political accords on social and economic issues.

#### October

The M-19 decides to disarm and create a political party.

#### November

The government and M-19 sign a *Political Pact*, recognizing the results of the Analysis and Consensus Working Groups. A bomb planted by members of the Medellín drug cartel explodes on an Avianca flight, killing 110 passengers.

### 1990

#### March

Despite the failure of constitutional reforms, the M-19 signs an agreement on its demobilization and

incorporation into the political process. Bernardo Jaramillo, presidential candidate of the Patriotic Union is assassinated.

#### April

Carlos Pizarro, leader of the M-19 and a presidential candidate, is assassinated.

#### May/June

The government has preliminary meetings with the EPL, PRT and Quintín Lame and a dialogue process is initiated separately with each group.

#### August

President César Gaviria Trujillo comes to power. He continues the peace processes with EPL, PRT and Quintín Lame.

#### September

The first summit of the commanders of the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body (CGSB) takes place.

#### December

The M-19 wins the second largest number of delegates to the Constituent Assembly.

The army attack 'Casa Verde', the stronghold of the FARC high command in La Uribe on the same day as the elections.

### 1991

#### January

The PRT signs a peace accord with the government. Similar agreements are later signed with the EPL and Quintín Lame.

#### February

The National Constituent Assembly is convened. In January and February the FARC conducts the largest escalation in military activities in its history.

#### April

Three CGSB guerrillas, along with some politicians, storm the Venezuelan Embassy to demand negotiations with the government.

#### May

The government reveals its new 'Strategy against violence' incorporating the possibility of initiating negotiations without a ceasefire. An exploratory meeting is held between the government and CGSB in Cravo Norte (Arauca). They agree to begin talks in Caracas.

## June

Two rounds of talks take place between the government and the CGSB.

## July

The new Constitution is promulgated. The Caracas talks with the CGSB continue, but there is a violent interlude during July and August.

## September/November

The third and fourth round of talks are held in Caracas.

## 1992

### March

Talks between the government and the CGSB resume in Tlaxcala, Mexico.

### June

Talks between the government and the CGSB break down.

## The integral war and marginal negotiations (1992-1994)

### July

Defence Minister Rafael Pardo publicly announces the government's 'Integral War' policy.

### September

Medellín drug cartel boss Pablo Escobar escapes from his luxurious high security prison in Envigado, Antioquia.

## 1993

### January

Pablo Escobar declares war on the government, leading to a major spate of car bombings and the assassination of judges, police and others.

### February

President Gaviria announces a major increase in military personnel.

### December

Pablo Escobar is shot dead by antinarcotics police.

## 1994

### April

The CRS signs a peace accord with the government.

### May

The Urban Militias of Medellín sign an agreement for their

demobilization following the same model used with the guerrilla groups.

## June

The Francisco Garnica Front signs an agreement for its demobilization and reintegration.

## Drug trafficking and obstacles to peace (1994-1998)

### August

Liberal Party candidate Ernesto Samper is elected President. He calls for negotiations with all guerrilla forces and an "integral peace" to tackle the socio-economic causes of conflict. Carlos Holmes Trujillo is named High Commissioner for Peace.

### November

The High Commissioner for Peace presents his first report and preparations for a negotiation process begin.

## 1995

### June/July

The Samper administration faces a severe crisis due to accusations that drug money was used to finance his presidential campaign. The Commander of the army opposes the plan to demilitarize the municipality of La Uribe to start talks with the FARC. Holmes Trujillo resigns as High Commissioner for Peace.

### August

The National Conciliation Commission is convened by the Catholic Church to explore alternatives for peace.

## 1996

### February

The ELN proposes a broad-based National Convention to discuss political, social and economic problems.

### March

Colombia is decertified by the US State Department for providing insufficient support for the war against drugs.

### April

The UN Commission on Human Rights asks to establish an office in Colombia. This is formally agreed with the Colombian government and opens one year later.

### August

The FARC launches an attack on a military base at Las Delicias, Putumayo. The base is destroyed, 54 soldiers die and 60 are captured.

## October

Two and a half million children participate in the Children's Mandate for Peace.

## 1997

### April

Carlos Castaño, leader of the Peasant Self-Defence Groups of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU), forms a national coalition of paramilitary groups, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC).

### June

The government signs a humanitarian agreement with the FARC to allow for the freeing of 70 soldiers.

### July

The AUC kills 49 peasants in the village of Mapiripán in southeastern Colombia.

## October

Nearly 10 million Colombians vote for the Citizen's Mandate for Peace, Life and Liberty.

## 1998

### February

The government and the ELN High Command sign the *Palace of Viana Pre-Agreement* in Madrid.

### March

FARC guerrillas attack a Colombian army battalion in southern Caquetá, killing 107 soldiers.

### April

The ELN announces the death of its leader, Manuel Pérez Martínez.

## Searching for a new model without success (1998-2002)

### July

President-elect Pastrana meets FARC commander Manuel Marulanda to discuss the withdrawal of the military from five municipalities and exchange views on future peace talks. *La Puerta del Cielo* (Door to Heaven) agreement on humanizing the war is signed by the ELN and civil society representatives in Germany. The Permanent Civil Society Peace Assembly meets for the first time.

### August

President Pastrana takes office. Víctor G. Ricardo is named High Commissioner for Peace.

## October

The Colombian government initiates talks with the ELN and recognizes their political status. Civil society representatives and the ELN hold a preparatory meeting in Río Verde (Antioquia). The ELN destroys a section of the central oil pipeline in Machuca, Antioquia, killing 70 civilians. The government suspends talks. Pastrana orders the creation of a demilitarized zone (DMZ) to facilitate talks with the FARC.

## November

The DMZ is established on 7 November for an initial period of 90 days.

## December

Government-ELN peace talks resume.

## 1999

### January

Paramilitaries carry out a series of civilian massacres. Pastrana attends the inauguration of the peace talks with the FARC in the DMZ. Marulanda does not attend. Talks are suspended with the FARC citing Pastrana's failure to take decisive action against the paramilitaries.

### February

Following Preparatory Committee meetings, High Commissioner Víctor G. Ricardo and ELN military chief Antonio García meet in Caracas but fail to agree dates and a location for the National Convention. Three US indigenous rights activists working in Arauca are abducted and later assassinated by the FARC.

### April

The ELN hijacks an Avianca domestic flight with 46 passengers and crew on board.

### May

The government and FARC agree a broad 12-point agenda for peace talks. The government extends the DMZ by 30 days. Defence Minister Rodrigo Lloreda resigns in protest at government handling of the peace process. The ELN attempts to kidnap an entire congregation at La Maria church in Cali and escapes with 63 people.

### June

The government suspends peace talks with the ELN and revokes its political status.

### July

Negotiations with the FARC are postponed indefinitely after failure to agree on the international verification commission for the DMZ. Pastrana declares that he wants

peace but is preparing for war. The Civilian Facilitation Commission (CFC) is formed.

### **August**

The government accepts CFC good offices and allows it to contact the ELN to facilitate the release of the Avianca and 'La María' hostages.

### **September**

Pastrana unveils Plan Colombia. The government commits US\$4 billion and seeks US\$3.5 billion from abroad.

### **October**

Government and ELN representatives meet in Havana, Cuba. Peace agenda talks between the government and the FARC begin after the government drops its demand for a verification commission in the DMZ. On the same day, an estimated 10 million people march in the *No Más* ('No More') campaign.

### **November**

Agenda talks with the FARC continue despite guerrilla offensives in 13 municipalities. The parties agree that 'public hearings' should begin in December, and the FARC offers a conditional Christmas-New Year truce. The government and the ELN hold a further round of talks.

### **December**

The Norwegian Jan Egeland is appointed Special Adviser to UN Secretary General on International Assistance to Colombia. The government extends the DMZ for six months. The first public hearing is postponed. The ELN releases the remaining Cali church hostages.

## **2000**

### **January**

The US government announces a US\$1.6 billion package for Plan Colombia.

### **February**

Inhabitants of southern Bolívar stage roadblocks, protesting against the possible establishment of the ELN meeting zone. Government-ELN talks resume in Caracas and continue in Havana.

### **March**

The government and the ELN meet once in Havana and twice in Caracas. The FARC establishes a clandestine political party called 'Bolivarian Movement for the New Colombia'.

### **April**

The FARC imposes a 'peace tax' on wealthy Colombians, threatening to kidnap those who do not pay. The Government and ELN announce agreement on a meeting zone.

### **May**

Camilo Gómez replaces Víctor G. Ricardo as High Commissioner for Peace.

### **June**

The government extends the DMZ for six months and restores political status to the ELN. The ELN, government and regional authorities meet in southern Bolívar to discuss local concerns about the meeting zone. Both sides agree to encourage the establishment of a 'Group of Friendly and Facilitator Countries'.

### **July**

The government and FARC exchange ceasefire proposals in sealed envelopes and agree on a period of one month to consider and respond to them. At an international conference in Madrid, the international community expresses support for the peace process and some countries offer financial assistance. Separately, President Clinton approves US\$1.3 billion for Plan Colombia. Government, representatives of civil society and ELN leaders meet in Geneva for a 'Conference on a National Consensus for Peace in Colombia'. The creation of the Group of Friends is confirmed.

### **August**

The government reactivates the National Peace Council.

### **September**

FARC member Arnubio Ramos hijacks an internal flight on 8 September and forces the aircraft to fly to the DMZ. The government freezes peace talks. The ELN kidnaps 70 civilians outside Cali.

### **October**

Representatives from Colombian civil society, the government, the ELN and the diplomatic community attend an 'International meeting on Peace, Human Rights, and International Humanitarian Law' in Costa Rica. Government-FARC negotiators agree to establish a special commission to resolve the problem of FARC hijacks. They also agree to begin a second round of public hearings and examine each other's ceasefire proposals.

### **November**

Following a meeting with the government, the AUC releases seven Congressmen. The FARC announces a

suspension of peace talks until the government clarifies its position with regard to the paramilitaries.

## **December**

Pastrana convenes the National Peace Council. The Government agrees to an extension of the DMZ until the end of January 2001. The government and the ELN hold talks in Havana. The ELN releases 42 hostages.

## **2001**

### **January**

The Government and ELN agree detailed ground rules for the proposed meeting zone in southern Bolívar.

### **February**

The army carries out operation Bolívar to clear the proposed ELN meeting zone. After a roadblock by 2000 inhabitants, the government agrees not to establish the zone before talking with the communities. Pastrana and Marulanda sign the *Los Pozos Accord*. The DMZ is extended for eight months and formal peace negotiations resume.

### **March**

The ELN unilaterally suspends peace talks, charging that further meetings in Southern Bolívar lacked security and credibility.

### **April**

The ELN announces the indefinite suspension of talks, criticizing the government's "lack of will".

### **May**

The Group of Friends and the Group of verification countries meet with the Colombian government to discuss conditions for the meeting zone.

### **June**

The government and the FARC agree on the release of 42 soldiers and policemen and the release of 15 imprisoned guerrilla members. The FARC unilaterally releases 242 soldiers and policemen. The CFC meets with ELN representatives in Caracas. An ELN-government meeting then takes place on Margarita Island, Venezuela.

### **August**

Government-ELN talks stall after a meeting in Caracas. President Pastrana announces that he is cutting off all talks with the ELN guerrillas.

### **September**

The AUC is added to the US State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations joining the FARC and

the ELN. The Comisión de Personalidades, created in May as a result of the *Los Pozos Accord*, presents its recommendations. Ex-minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera is kidnapped and assassinated by the FARC.

### **October**

The FARC and the government sign the *San Francisco de la Sombra accord*. The DMZ is renewed until 20 January 2002. Marulanda orders the FARC to withdraw from negotiations until flights over and control of entry to the DMZ are stopped. In Antioquia, 23 mayors secretly negotiate a ceasefire with the ELN. The government opposes the move.

### **November**

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative for the Peace Process in Colombia, Jan Egeland, resigns and is replaced by James LeMoyne. Marulanda challenges the governing classes to hold a meeting to discuss what is really negotiable.

*The Accord for Colombia* is signed in Havana between the government and the ELN.

### **December**

The ELN and the government issue the '*Havana Declaration*', agreeing to begin ceasefire discussions in January, and to hold a series of thematic meetings in Cuba.

## **2002**

### **January**

Pastrana suspends the peace talks and announces that the armed forces will re-enter the demilitarized zone in 48 hours. The government gives UN, the Group of Friends and the Church time to investigate alternative options. Following intense efforts, the FARC announces that there are sufficient guarantees for the process to continue. The parties then agree a timetable to negotiate a ceasefire. The DMZ is extended until 10 April. The Summit for Peace between the ELN and the government takes place in Havana.

### **February**

The US Government announces US\$98 million to fund a new Colombian army unit to defend oil infrastructure from guerrilla attacks. The FARC hijacks a plane kidnapping a congressman. Pastrana announces the end of the peace process with the FARC. The FARC kidnaps the senator and presidential candidate Ingrid Betancur.

### **March**

The second and third Havana working sessions between the ELN and government take place.

## April

The Group of Friends participate on one day of the fourth ELN-government working session in Havana

## May

Pastrana suspends peace talks with the ELN, claiming they are not committed to peace. During a clash with paramilitaries, the FARC attacks the church of Bojaya (Chocó) with a cylinder bomb, killing 119 civilians sheltering inside.

## Security policy as a path to peace (2002—)

## August

Álvaro Uribe becomes president on a platform of 'Democratic Security', adopting a hard line towards the guerrillas.

## September

The US asks for the extradition of paramilitary leaders Carlos Castaño, Salvatore Mancuso and Juan Carlos Sierra.

## December

The AUC declares a unilateral ceasefire.

## 2003

## February

The FARC bombs a club in Bogotá, killing around 30 people.

## May

Peru's President Alejandro Toledo says that leaders of the Rio Group have agreed to ask UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to press Colombia's guerrillas and paramilitaries to negotiate a peace deal.

## July

An inter-governmental donor coordination meeting is held in London resulting in the *London Declaration*. During a visit to Brazil, Uribe says that there is no possibility of peace dialogue with the FARC. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo announces that nine paramilitary groups have agreed to demobilize and begin formal peace negotiations with the government.

## August

The government signs a framework agreement with the AUC. The FARC and the ELN issue a rare joint statement ruling out peace talks with the Uribe administration.

## October

Luis Eduardo Garzón of the *Polo Democrático* is elected Mayor of Bogotá. Uribe loses a referendum on his proposed political and economic reforms.

## November

The government signs an accord for negotiations with paramilitary groups Bloque Central Bolívar and Vencedores de Arauca. The demobilization of 800 paramilitaries of the Bloque Cacique Nutibara (the main Medellín paramilitary group) begins.

## December

A further 155 paramilitaries hand in their weapons in Ortega (Cauca). The ELN releases five foreign tourists kidnapped in September, following negotiations mediated by the Catholic Church.