



# Colombia



Courtesy: IDMC

**Reasons for Displacement:** Colombia has been struggling for over 40 years with internal conflict between paramilitaries, guerilla groups and the Colombian army. As a result of the conflict,

nearly four million Colombians have been forced from their homes since 1985. The conflict is exacerbated by the widespread illegal narcotics industry in Colombia, which is the source of enormous amounts of violence. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is Colombia's most threatening insurgency and is responsible for widespread extortion, kidnapping, military violence, and other crimes associated with drug trafficking. Since 2012, peace talks have been held between the government and FARC to find a peaceful solution to the longstanding conflict.

## Refugee and IDP Communities:

Colombia has the second highest number of IDPs in the world behind Syria. With no displacement camps in Colombia, those displaced live in host communities and are unable or unwilling to return to their point of origin. One significant issue for IDPs in Colombia is their lack of proper identity papers, which means they are often excluded from basic services like health care and education and find it difficult to get employment.

Those Colombians who have fled abroad due to the conflict carry the label as the world's 'invisible' refugees, as they do not live in camps and usually cross the border in 'drop by drop' displacements rather than mass group movements. Whilst Ecuador hosts the largest concentration of displaced Colombians, there are also many Colombian refugees residing in Venezuela, Panama, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil.

## Assistance:

- RIJ funded training to help IDPs understand their basic legal rights as well as a project establishing safe educational centres for 426 young students in areas of unrest
- The Colombian Red Cross projects include classes on violence-prevention, first aid, and health. NGOs in Colombia include Local Dioceses, Action Contre la Faim, and many more



## Number of refugees:

237 residing in Colombia;  
397,079 originating from Colombia  
[source: UNHCR]

**Number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):**  
6,044,200  
[source: IDMC]

## History:

**1964**—FARC is established as military wing of the Colombian Communist Party; The National Liberation Army, a Marxist guerrilla group, is founded

**1997**— The United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) is formed and considered a terrorist organization by many countries

**2004**— FARC breaks off peace negotiations with the government, hijacks a plane, and attacks the Presidential Palace, killing many civilians

**2008**— 14 Warlords stand trial on drug trafficking charges in the U.S.

**2011**—Protests against FARC groups occur nationwide; Victims and Restitution Law is signed

**2012**—Peace talks between Colombian government and FARC rebels begin

**2014**— reelection of President Santos

**2015**— peace negotiations are accompanied by increasing violent escalation; government is prepared to begin dialogue on bilateral ceasefire