



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment

Snapshot

Colombia

December 2025

Context

Period covered by the report: October 2025-December 2025 (2nd EES updated the 1st directly.)

The social and political landscape in Colombia remains marked by widespread violence that shows no signs of abating. [The killing of social leaders continues at critical levels](#) and, according to the most recent figures, 2025 has seen a rising trend compared to previous years, consolidating a progressive deterioration in the safeguards for the defence of rights across the country. This situation is directly linked to disputes between illegal armed groups in various regions of the country, which directly affects communities – particularly in rural areas and working-class neighbourhoods in cities – as well as journalists, environmental defenders and peace signatories. Against this backdrop, [the state’s capacity to prevent, protect and respond remains limited](#): measures continue to be reactive, piecemeal and poorly coordinated, failing to achieve the level of territorial intervention demanded by current risk dynamics; furthermore, [the outcome of the ‘total peace’ policy implemented by the government is negative](#), as it has fragmented efforts and encouraged the proliferation of criminal actors.

At the same time, institutional legitimacy is at a particularly fragile juncture. [Corruption scandals](#) and poor performance in areas such as [transparency](#) and [security](#) have eroded public trust. The government is entering the final phase of its term, with [partial responses to structural challenges](#), which weakens its capacity for political leadership at a critical moment.

This scenario sets the stage for the 2026 presidential election. The country enters the electoral cycle with growing polarisation, with rhetoric that strains public participation, and with governmental, political, social and economic institutions locked in a power struggle between the continuation of an alternative political project (left-wing or progressive) and the return of traditional political forces. Colombia begins 2026 facing a dual challenge: managing a polarised democracy and protecting those who sustain civic action under adverse conditions, at a decisive moment for the country’s institutional trajectory.

Amid this demanding landscape of the country’s democratic transition, the national government, in its final months in power, is focused on attempting to fulfil electoral promises and agreements set out in the National Development Plan. Time is running out, and the requirements of administrative management during election periods ([Guarantees Act](#)) mean that the process of ensuring full rights remains unfulfilled for a significant proportion of the population.

1. Respect for and protection of fundamental freedoms

Between October and December 2025, tensions surrounding civil liberties intensified due to the convergence of three factors: the run-up to the [2026 elections in a climate of growing political polarisation](#); the escalation of violence in strategic regions linked to illicit economies and extractive projects; and the persistence of [institutional gaps in the prevention and protection of social leaders, environmental defenders, communities and journalists](#).

This combination, coupled with [the national government’s limited capacity to respond to this critical situation](#), tends to push human rights agendas aside in favour of immediate electoral debates, reducing attention to territorial risks and the erosion of basic safeguards.

During this six-month period, the worrying trend of violence against social leaders continued. [According to Indepaz](#), as of November 2025, 1,865 murders had already been recorded since 2016, and the monthly trend from October to November shows an upturn that could see the

year close with figures higher than those of 2023 and 2024. The organisation warns that this increase is directly linked to the run-up to the 2026 elections, where armed groups are seeking to influence local dynamics of governance, territorial control and illicit economies.

[The regions most affected remain Cauca, Chocó, Antioquia, Nariño, Valle del Cauca and Norte de Santander](#), where disputes between armed groups continue as they seek to [control mining, social participation and strategic corridors](#). [In south-western Antioquia in 2025](#), the AGC's Edwin Román Vásquez Bloc intensified its presence and capacity for coercion, affecting environmental defenders, community leaders and the general population.

Despite these warnings, [the state's response has failed to take a preventive approach](#). Measures continue to focus on individual protection, whilst the current risks are collective, territorial and linked to disputes over mining economies, drug trafficking and local governance.

With regard to the situation of journalists, between October and November 2025, new threats, attacks and pressure against journalists were documented, in a context [where reporting has become more dangerous](#) due to a combination of political polarisation and shifts in armed control across different territories, as well as [persistent impunity in the investigation of cases of violence](#). This dynamic has been particularly notable in departments with a presence of armed groups, such as Caquetá, Antioquia, Nariño and Norte de Santander. [The polarised political climate fuels smear campaigns, online harassment and public shaming](#) that intensify the atmosphere of stigmatisation, creating conditions for self-censorship, particularly in local and community media. In this context, concerns were further exacerbated when FARC dissidents released a video in which their negotiators labelled Caracol Televisión journalists as “actors in the armed conflict”, a statement which, as [FLIP warned](#), constitutes a serious threat to press freedom and the safety of journalists.

Thus, between October and December 2025, civil liberties faced a sustained deterioration marked by the electoral context, the persistence of structural violence and the state's inability to respond to complex territorial risks. The intensification of threats against social leaders, journalists and environmental defenders confirms that the enabling environment remains fragile and that the institutional response has been insufficient to guarantee the full exercise of rights during a politically decisive six-month period.

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

Between October and December 2025, the formal stability of the legal framework governing civil society organisations was maintained, but the polarised political environment and the run-up to the 2026 elections limited the possibility of implementing structural reforms to strengthen participation and organisational autonomy. During this period, specific regulatory advances were combined with the persistence of regulatory gaps that create uncertainty for organisations across the country.

A critical issue was the continued lack of regulations for Article 86 of the National Development Plan (PND), which establishes a registration and reporting system for non-profit organisations. [The absence of regulations during this six-month period maintains concerns regarding its potential effects](#) on organisational autonomy, particularly due to the risk of creating disproportionate administrative burdens, excessive control mechanisms or reporting requirements that could be applied at the discretion of officials. As the government's term

draws to a close, this leaves the door open for a future administration to implement the necessary regulations.

In contrast, a significant step forward was the issuance of [Decree 1229 of 2025](#), which updates the National Planning System (SNP), the result of a dialogue process with social, academic and territorial organisations. The [SNP](#) aimed to facilitate the participation of communities and civil society in planning decision-making within the public sector and to coordinate the different levels of government. The new design [strengthens citizen participation in state planning cycles at the territorial level and recognises regional and local bodies that historically had little influence](#). This decree had been long overdue since the promulgation of the 1991 Constitution. During this six-month period, [organisations welcomed the government's decision to maintain this participatory exercise](#) despite national polarisation, and considered that the decree opens a window of opportunity to improve coordination between civil society and local authorities in participatory planning processes.

However, these developments coexisted with distinct administrative and operational barriers in specific regions, which limited the full exercise of the right of association. Between October and November, [community and environmental organisations in south-western Antioquia reported difficulties](#) in registering meetings or activities with local councils, due to restrictions imposed by illegal armed groups and the institutional inability to guarantee support or safe spaces. Meanwhile, in the [Catatumbo region of Norte de Santander](#), [social organisations faced restrictions on holding assemblies or meetings](#) due to curfews or mobility restrictions imposed de facto by illegal armed groups.

In all these cases, the barriers did not arise from changes in national legislation, but from security conditions, limited institutional capacity and territorial pressures such as illegal armed groups or mobility difficulties due to a lack of resources and connectivity, which undermine the effectiveness of formally recognised rights.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Between October and December 2025, civil society organisations continued to face a fragile sustainability landscape, marked by a decline in financial resources and the absence of state mechanisms to address this.

A significant development during the period was the publication of the [2025 Social Sector Study by Compartamos con Colombia](#), which warns that 53% of the country's social organisations have no reserves to operate for more than three months without additional income, and that a significant proportion depends on a single source of funding. The study also highlights internal gaps in strategic planning and impact measurement, which limit organisations' ability to sustain their operations in contexts of uncertainty.

Another key milestone during the period was the [public statement by organisations from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe](#), announcing that they would demand binding clauses on participation and protection for civil society within the framework of the CELAC–EU cooperation agreements. The declaration, released on 8 November 2025, proposes incorporating formal commitments on participation, transparency and safeguards for social organisations into cooperation instruments, and comes in response to the lack of guarantees and the growing political and financial risks faced by organisations in the region. [This process raises the need to shield international cooperation from internal political pressures](#) and to

reduce the discretion with which some governments manage their relationship with the social sector, by allocating a specific, multilaterally agreed budget.

Finally, added to the above is information gathered in an interview conducted in November 2025 with [Corporación Región](#), experts in strengthening local organisations, which indicates that for many of these, the end-of-year period is particularly challenging. According to this internal source, the lack of liquidity in the final quarter of the year often forces some organisations to take measures that affect their internal governance, such as the precariousness of employment, through staff reductions, a freeze on vacancies or changes to contractual arrangements offering fewer guarantees; and indebtedness, used as a mechanism to meet payroll and operational obligations whilst awaiting new funds or the formalisation of outstanding payments from agreements or donations.

Taken together, these elements show that, between October and November 2025, the issue of resources centred on three factors: the empirical confirmation of structural financial fragility in the sector; the need, raised by civil society, for international cooperation frameworks that include specific safeguards; and the tensions inherent in the year-end period, which manifest themselves in difficult internal decisions regarding employment and debt.

4. State openness and responsiveness

Between October and December 2025, state openness and dialogue between the government and civil society oscillated between regulatory and technical progress and a critical assessment of the fight against corruption and the integrity of the political system, all amidst strong polarisation and the run-up to the 2026 elections.

At the institutional level, a significant step forward was consolidated with the issuance of [Decree 1229 of 2025](#), mentioned earlier under Principle 2, which updates the National Planning System, the result of consultation processes with social organisations and other stakeholders. This decree expands and formalises channels for participation in planning, recognises territorial bodies and introduces mechanisms that [can strengthen dialogue between citizens and the State in defining public priorities](#).

At the same time, Colombia consolidated a leading position in open data: the country ranked [fifth globally in the Global Data Barometer 2025](#), with a score of 61.22, making it the top-ranked country in Latin America and the Caribbean. The index highlights progress in public procurement, state finances, asset declarations and political financing, as well as a data policy which, at least in formal terms, promotes transparency and access to information for public oversight and innovation.

However, these advances contrast with a critical assessment of the anti-corruption framework. In August 2025, [Transparencia por Colombia published its review of public action on anti-corruption three years into the government's term](#), concluding that the administration has shown no real changes compared to its initial promises and that institutional weaknesses, unfinished measures and a lack of a comprehensive strategy to tackle corruption persist. This assessment notes that, despite some transparency measures, inter-institutional coordination is limited and robust policies on access to information or redress for victims of corruption have not been established. Added to this is the recent news that the government [exceeded electoral funding limits in the 2022 campaign](#), a situation which is still under investigation.

In this same context, the discussion on electoral integrity became a central focus of public debate. From a regulatory perspective, the [entry into force of the Electoral Guarantees Act on](#)

[8 November 2025](#) sought to ensure greater transparency in public procurement ahead of the 2026 elections. Colombia Compra Eficiente issued [External Circular 006 of 2025](#) to guide entities in the application of the law, highlighting restrictions such as the ban on inter-administrative agreements using public funds from November and on direct procurement without a call for tenders from the end of January 2026, as well as an institutional awareness-raising effort through large-scale training sessions.

From the perspective of electoral observation, the Electoral Observation Mission (MOE) [warned during this period of several risk factors for the transparency of the 2026 elections](#), including the presence of illegal armed groups influencing the campaign in various parts of the country, disinformation and polarisation in political communication, and a lack of clarity in the funding rules for the collection of signatures. The organisation emphasised that only coordinated work between authorities, civil society and observation bodies can ensure a free and transparent electoral process, and announced its aim to deploy 10,000 observers on the ground.

Overall, the six-month period presents an ambivalent picture: on the one hand, the formal infrastructure for openness and participation is being strengthened, with improved performance in open data and a new framework for planning and procurement during the electoral period; on the other, independent assessments rate anti-corruption efforts as unfavourable and warn of significant risks to the integrity of the political system.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

Between August and November 2025, the issue of political culture and discourse on civil society remained largely centred on the stigmatisation of social actors, tensions regarding the legitimacy of protest, and persistent risks to human rights defenders and peace signatories. Once again, the context of political polarisation and expectations surrounding the 2026 electoral cycle influenced this dynamic.

During this period, one of the most notable events was the [statement issued by the United Nations in October](#), drawing attention to [remarks made by the Minister of the Interior](#) linking peaceful protests to criminal networks, as these were stigmatising and contrary to human rights standards. This episode highlighted a public dispute over the legitimacy of social mobilisation and demonstrated how certain institutional discourses can contribute to generating perceptions of suspicion or criminality regarding those exercising their right to protest.

At the regional and sectoral levels, various alternative media outlets such as [Vorágine](#) and [Colombia Informa](#) documented that in regions with persistent conflict, there were incidents of intimidation against communities attempting to participate in protests, including the presence of armed civilians and tense situations with the security forces. These reports do not indicate a nationwide pattern, but they do highlight specific instances where social actors faced pressure or risks whilst attempting to raise awareness of their demands.

A further key issue during this period was the stigma directed at signatories to the peace agreement. In September 2025, [the United Nations warned of a rise in homicides in Antioquia](#), where six signatories had been murdered that year. At the same time, recent [opinion polls](#)

show that perceptions of this group remain significantly more negative than those of other social leaders, and that information relating to issues such as land redistribution tends to trigger prejudice and hostile attitudes. This combination of social stigma and lethal violence directly undermines the public legitimacy of reintegration and hinders the consolidation of the Peace Agreement.

Added to this are the numerous protests that took place during the [six-month period, which were met with stigmatising messages](#) linking social organisations to organised crime actors and contributing to this polarised environment that puts the lives of social leaders at risk.

In November, a notable case of stigmatisation came to light, directed at a human rights defender, [Juan Camilo Villalobos](#), who was the target of smear campaigns and threats after participating in an international coordination process. Human rights organisations reported that the attacks sought to discredit his work and instil fear in his community. This episode illustrated the use of digital platforms as a venue for personalised stigmatisation against defenders.

Overall, the six-month period revealed a fragile social environment for collective action and for those engaged in the defence of rights.

6. Access to a secure digital environment

Between October and December 2025, the digital dimension of the enabling environment was marked by tensions between advances in connectivity policies and persistent territorial gaps that continue to limit the exercise of rights.

Available analyses show that [the digital divide continues to be a manifestation of territorial inequality](#). Although some departments showed improvements in recent indicators, regions such as the Orinoquía and the Amazon continue to lag behind structurally in both access to and meaningful use of technologies. [The Comptroller General's Office noted during this period that connectivity in the country remains limited](#) and unequal, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure is insufficient. These observations tie in with [expert discussions](#) indicating that the social internet policy faces design challenges and that coverage expansion targets may not correspond to actual progress in infrastructure, investment and effective use.

At the same time, the national government presented initiatives aimed at bridging these gaps, including the selection of around [900 grassroots organisations for the Juntas de Internet programme](#) and the announcement of a strategy based on satellite solutions to bring connectivity to remote areas. These measures were welcomed as attempts to diversify access models and promote community-based schemes, but they were met with questions regarding their technical coherence and the institutional capacity to implement them in the medium term. These concerns include the perspective set out in [Bill 193 of 2025](#), which aims to make the internet a public service in the interests of democratisation, but which [raises questions](#) regarding [state control of information](#) and whether the approach via subsidies is appropriate.

This half-year also saw more intense discussion of the risks associated with unsafe digital environments for children and adolescents. The enactment of [Law 2489 of 2025](#), aimed at promoting healthy and safe digital environments, reopened the debate on state and social responsibility regarding digital education, risk prevention and the protection of rights. This development relates to recent warnings regarding the [use of social media platforms to influence, contact or lure adolescents](#) into the dynamics of armed conflict. Although several of

the reported cases date from the first half of the year, the adoption of the new legal framework in October responded precisely to these concerns and poses a challenge in terms of coordination between institutions, families, communities and organisations.

Overall, the period demonstrated that digital security remains constrained by territorial inequality, limited institutional capacity to implement a coherent connectivity policy, and the new forms of risk faced by vulnerable populations online. The regulatory and programmatic advances of the six-month period represent important steps, but their impact will depend on the state's ability to translate these announcements into real improvements in access, safe use and the protection of digital rights across the country.

Challenges and Opportunities

In the coming months, the enabling environment for civil society will be profoundly shaped by the formal start of the 2026 electoral cycle, which is likely to increase political polarisation, the contest over the public narrative, and pressure on social leaders, journalists, human rights defenders and peace signatories.

In this scenario, the State's ability to maintain channels of dialogue will be decisive: the implementation of the updated National Planning System, as well as mechanisms for participation and access to information, and the continued implementation of the Peace Agreement, will depend on government bodies maintaining openness and consistency amidst the institutional realignment typical of the electoral period and the end of the government's term.

Structural challenges persist regarding public integrity, political financing and compliance with the Electoral Guarantees Act, requiring coordination between authorities, oversight bodies and social organisations to preserve public confidence in the democratic process.

Added to this is the persistence of a territorial digital divide that limits equitable access to information, services and opportunities, and which may exacerbate inequalities in participation during the campaign. At the same time, the financial sustainability of civil society organisations remains a critical issue, affected by regulatory delays, budgetary instability and the challenges of the fiscal year-end.

Nevertheless, the electoral period presents an opportunity for civil society to influence strategic debates on the country's future, promote rights-based agendas and assert its role as a guarantor of pluralism, public integrity and the protection of those who exercise leadership in the regions.

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