

# latin american weekly report

25 October 2018, WR-18-42

ISSN 0143-5280

## CONTENTS

<b>LEADER</b>	<b>1</b>
Migrant caravan: a tipping point?	
<b>ANDEAN COUNTRIES</b>	
<b>PERU</b>	<b>3</b>
Fuerza Popular in meltdown	
<b>BRAZIL &amp; SOUTHERN CONE</b>	
<b>ARGENTINA</b>	<b>5</b>
A nasty job almost done?	
<b>BRAZIL</b>	<b>7</b>
The military's return to national politics?	
<b>BRAZIL</b>	<b>8</b>
Bolsonaro poised for likely victory	
<b>CHILE</b>	<b>9</b>
Piñera still looking in rear-view mirror	
<b>URUGUAY</b>	<b>11</b>
Military pension approved against tense backdrop	
<b>MEXICO &amp; NAFTA</b>	
<b>MEXICO</b>	<b>12</b>
López Obrador's plans for Pemex disconcert	
TRACKING TRENDS	
<b>CENTRAL AMERICA &amp; CARIBBEAN</b>	
<b>GUATEMALA</b>	<b>14</b>
Congress delivers further blow to anti-impunity efforts	
<b>HAITI</b>	<b>15</b>
Moïse forced to address Petrocaribe scandal	
<b>POSTSCRIPT</b>	<b>16</b>
Demobilised Farc leaders avoid falling foul of JEP	
Quotes of the week	

This edition of *Latin American Weekly Report* has been produced for Canning House Corporate Members by LatinNews ([www.latinnews.com](http://www.latinnews.com)).  
*Latin American Newsletters since 1967*

## Migrant caravan: a tipping point?

A caravan of up to 7,000 Central American migrants has been working its way from Honduras through Guatemala and Mexico with the aim of entering the United States. This, the second big caravan this year, has generated widespread news headlines and *Twitter*-based threats from US President Donald Trump to cut off aid to Central America's 'northern triangle' countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras). There is reason to believe this particular caravan may have major knock-on effects, not least on the US mid-term Congressional elections, on relations between the US and the incoming administration of Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), and on the Central American economies.

Migrant caravans are becoming more popular. For people trying to escape poverty, domestic and gang violence, as well as the impact of drought in the Northern Triangle, they may offer a little more safety in numbers (smaller groups of migrants are more vulnerable to blackmail and violence during their trip north). NGOs and other human rights organisations may also feel that caravans help attract media attention, make a political point, and dramatise the plight of the refugees. The previous caravan happened in April this year, and at its peak totalled around 1,500 people. By the time it eventually arrived at the US frontier in San Diego in May, it had dwindled to about one-third of that number: many gave up, were turned back, or opted to stay in Mexico along the way. According to legal sources a total of 403 migrants were processed in the US and submitted to 'credible fear' interviews (the first step to decide whether they have the right to asylum in the US). On average, only about 20% of those requesting asylum in the US are successful; cases can take years to resolve. How these cases are processed remains a key source of controversy in US politics. Even though earlier this year the Trump administration backtracked on its unpopular policy of separating families and holding children in detention camps, other aspects of its 'zero tolerance' policy are still in place and have made it a lot more difficult for migrants to get in to the country.

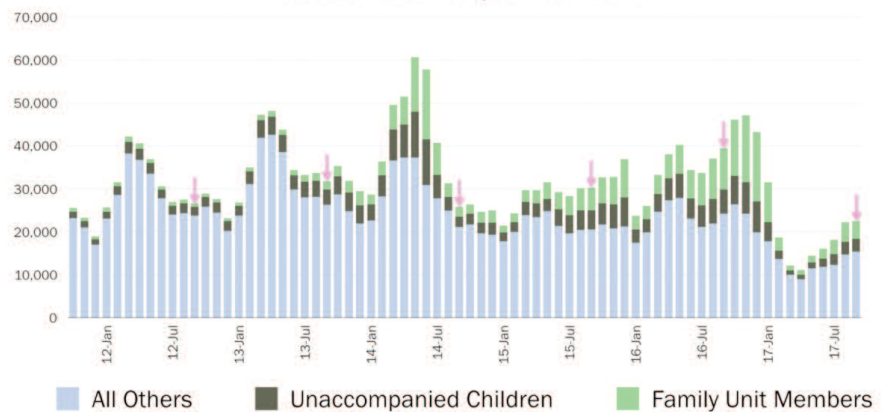
There is reason to believe that the immediate outcomes of the current caravan won't be that different from the last one, except that this time bigger numbers are involved. Once more, maybe more than half will drop out on the route north. Under pressure from the US, the governments of Guatemala and Honduras said they had closed a key frontier crossing and sent some 2,000 migrants back to Honduras, their country of origin. Mexico, also under pressure from Washington, has made entry through its southern border more difficult. There were clashes with border police near Ciudad Hidalgo on 19 October. Eventually Mexico let members of the caravan through in small groups. Reports suggest that up to another 1,000 caravan members had filed requests seeking political asylum in Mexico and would therefore not continue on to the US.

The current caravan is particularly important because it comes just ahead of the US mid-term congressional elections due on 6 November. Fuelling anti-migrant sentiment has been a key feature of Trump's appeal to his core voters, and there have been signs that the administration is out once again to make political capital from the current wave of migrants. Despite the absence of any concrete evidence to back their claim, the president and his supporters say the caravan includes "criminals and unknown Middle Easterners". US Vice-President Mike Pence said that the President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernández, had told him the caravan was "organised by left wingers and funded by Venezuela". There was no evidence to support that claim either.

Trump's *Twitter* account was in overdrive. "Every time you see a caravan...blame the Democrats for not giving us the votes to change our pathetic immigration laws! Remember the midterms," was one of his messages. He also threatened to close the US-Mexico border and to cut off economic aid to Guatemala and Honduras. It is of course not entirely clear whether the migration issue will, at the end of the day, play in favour of the Republicans or the Democrats in the mid-terms. An opinion poll by the Kaiser Foundation in the US suggested immigration was the top issue of 15% of US voters, but reached a higher 25% among Republican voters.

The furious political controversy over Central American migration into the US can distort perceptions. While there is undoubtedly a serious issue at stake, and while migrant flows have increased in recent months, undocumented migration is still below the record levels of 2014. According to US Customs and Border Protection, migrant apprehensions in the fiscal year ending 30 September 2017 totalled 303,916, the lowest level in over four decades. In FY2018, however, this increased significantly to 396,579 (+30.5%) but remained below the 569,237 of FY2014.

Migrant Apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico Border, October 2011-September 2017



Months of September denoted with pink arrows

Source: <http://bit.ly/2mDr1fQ>

This caravan may also be critical as a force shaping US-Mexico relations in the coming AMLO era. López Obrador takes office at the start of a six-year Mexican presidential term on 1 December. Trump, a right-wing populist and AMLO, a left-wing populist, appear to have got on surprisingly well since López Obrador won the July elections. But that could be no more than the calm before a storm. AMLO's proposals on migration are in stark contrast to Trump's. The US president wants a harder line on the border; a wall; and more deportations and enforcement. Mexico's incoming foreign minister, Marcelo Ebrard, has said, "We don't agree with this, as it would be counterproductive and would aggravate the problem. Another policy is needed." In fact, AMLO wants big investment in economic development in southern Mexico and the Northern Triangle to help provide employment and stem the flow of migrants;

he also wants work visas and for migrants to be treated with respect. Duncan Wood of the US-based Mexico Institute/Wilson Centre says the caravan could be the first real 'bronca' (bust-up) between Trump and AMLO. Another US-based analyst, Adam Isacson of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), agrees, saying, "Any incident could be the trigger. This could be it."

This and future caravans could also have major implications for the struggling economies of the Northern Triangle. The Trumpian threat to cut off aid is a concern, even if it is unlikely to materialise in the very short term (US foreign aid is mostly controlled by Congress, which may take a different view, and where the balance of forces between Republicans and Democrats may in any case change as a result of the mid-terms). The purpose of the threat is, in theory at least, to force the Northern Triangle countries to stop their citizens from trying to get into the US – but few analysts believe that, realistically speaking, the governments concerned actually have the capacity to stem the flow. Gustavo Mohar, a former Mexican government official, told the *Financial Times* "Immigration is a safety valve for these countries who have poor institutions and rule of law and no ability to keep them. The US will pressure them so the migrants don't leave. But the governments couldn't even if they wanted to." Many believe that the opposite approach – channelling aid towards projects that reduce poverty and violence, offers a better long-term prospect of reducing migration flows.

The Northern Triangle economies are particularly dependent on remittances from their expatriate workers in the US (which account for over 10% of GDP). The current situation places the right-wing governments of Honduras and Guatemala in a particularly difficult position. They have gone out of their way to support President Trump's foreign policy (for example by following his lead and moving their embassies in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem) in the hope that this would earn them Washington's sympathy on the migration issue. But from their point of view there has been little payback: in fact, the threat of reduced US foreign aid is destabilising for their economies, and tends to undermine investor confidence.

## ANDEAN COUNTRIES

### PERU | POLITICS

#### Fuerza Popular in meltdown

**Peru's largest political party was in crisis this week, as its main leader Keiko Fujimori appeared in court hearings designed to determine whether she and 10 collaborators should be sentenced to 36 months' imprisonment for accepting illicit campaign financing during the 2011 general election.**

Despite a split last year when Keiko's brother, Kenji, and some of his followers left the party, Fuerza Popular (FP, Fujimoristas) is still the largest party in the national congress, controlling 62 of the 130 seats. Whether it will continue to be so in the immediate future is now hanging in doubt: the party is in a mess. The key problem is that Keiko has a major struggle on her hands to try to keep out of prison.

After an initial eight-days imprisonment and subsequent release, Keiko is looking at a potentially longer spell of prison time. She is charged with accepting illicit campaign contributions in the run-up to the 2011 election, including US\$1.2m from Odebrecht, the Brazilian civil engineering firm that has admitted to paying bribes to politicians in a number of countries across the region. On 24 October Keiko was present during 13 hours of hearings before Judge Richard Concepción Carhuancho, and heard the prosecutor make his case that she and her 10 co-defendants were guilty of criminal association.

## Hinostroza Caught

On 19 October Interpol arrested the former Peruvian supreme court justice César Hinostroza in Spain, with Peru's President Martín Vizcarra saying Peru would press for early extradition. Hinostroza is a central figure in the scandal over influence peddling and corruption in the Peruvian judiciary, and stands accused of taking bribes in exchange for leniency in court judgements. He was dismissed from the supreme court by the national congress two weeks earlier, and faced impending trial, but was nevertheless able to escape the country by crossing the border into Ecuador and making his way to Spain where he is seeking political asylum, claiming to be a

The case for the prosecution alleges that a network of FP officials and advisers, directed by Keiko, laundered money for use by the party. The hearings were extended, and are continuing as we go to press.

While the courtroom drama played out, the Fujimoristas appeared to be imploding. Already at the start of the week the FP president of congress, Daniel Salaverry, had announced that he was "temporarily" leaving Fuerza Popular, as he put it, to "maintain the impartiality that has characterised my decisions as head of the legislature".

The next to go was José Chlimper, a businessman who was also serving as general-secretary of the party. Ironically, FP spokeswoman Úrsula Letona had only a day earlier said that the party had formed an "emergency committee" which had decided that Chlimper would be its temporary leader if Keiko went back into prison. That was not to be: Chlimper resigned on the day of the hearings after being accused of making an illicit US\$210,000 cash payment for election advertising spots to local radio and TV broadcaster *Radio Programas del Peru (RPP)* in 2011. Chlimper had at first "absolutely" denied making any such payments, but was contradicted by *RPP*, which confirmed it had received the money from him.

In another significant development Rolando Reátegui, an FP deputy, publicly admitted that he had turned state's witness in the illicit funding case against Keiko and other party leaders. Plea-bargaining in Peru is known as 'colaboración eficaz' and Reátegui said he had taken that option because Keiko had failed to live up to the party motto of "unity, discipline, and loyalty". He said he had unwittingly helped disguise the origins of funding contributions. In his view the party leadership had confused loyalty with impunity, and placed its personal interests above the central political ideas it had pledged to defend. Reátegui added, "this is perhaps the moment to appoint a new party president".

The departures come against the background of embarrassing leaks and investigative reporting which is casting a harsh light on FP's behaviour. The local investigative reporting portal *IDL Reporteros* has published WhatsApp messages exchanged by FP party members, which show the party leadership in an unflattering light.

In some of the messages Keiko comes across as an obsessive micro-manager, giving instructions to FP deputies on when, and when not, to applaud President Martín Vizcarra during official speeches. Other communications reveal a coordinated attempt to criticise José Domingo Pérez, the chief prosecutor in the case against Keiko.

FP Deputy Luz Salgado has admitted that the party is in crisis, which she attributes to a backlash for its role in forcing the resignation of president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in March this year. Spokeswoman Letona said all members of the FP's executive committee (CEN) as well as the political committee (Comité Político) had presented their resignations to allow a restructuring.

Although it was not clear who would lead such a restructuring, Letona said one of the aims would be to ensure greater participation in decision-making which had become excessively "compartmentalised". Letona added that the party had made mistakes in the way it sought to scrutinise government decisions, and would now focus on "an agenda of reforms".

Other leading FP party members say there has been friction between the congressional leadership, the CEN, the political leadership, and the team of party spokespersons.

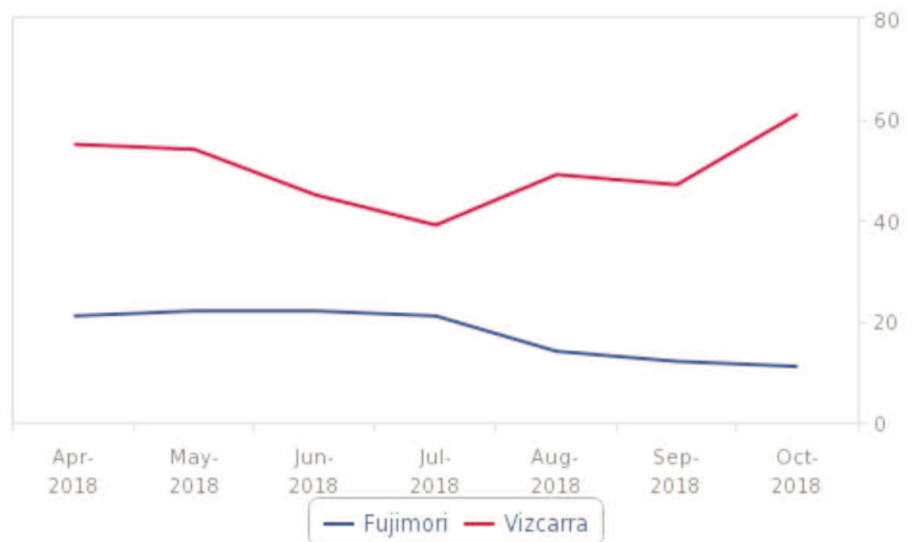
victim of persecution in Peru. As a result of his flight Vizcarra's interior minister, Mauro Medina, presented his resignation. Retired police general Carlos Morán, a member of the special police unit that captured Abimael Guzmán, the leader of the Sendero Luminoso guerrilla movement, in 1992, was sworn in as the new interior minister.

With President Vizcarra for the moment holding the upper hand, and despite ambiguity over the state of its leadership, the punch-drunk FP appears to be opting for a more conciliatory tone. It has been revealed that during Keiko's first period in prison a delegation from the party held a meeting with Vizcarra. Miguel Castro, an FP deputy who was present, said he had found Vizcarra to be "a receptive person who shares our idea that the political forces should seek to reduce tensions".

The FP subsequently chose not to support a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister César Villanueva filed by the Partido Aprista Peruano (PAP). Keiko herself appears to be supporting the more moderate line. In a statement issued on the day before her hearings she said the party was calling for a "national dialogue". The FP congressional block, Keiko said, would seek talks without preconditions with other parties to shape a shared agenda to fight poverty, injustice, and corruption. Her own party, she said, would be "making changes at different levels" of its leadership structure.

#### Vizcarra Winning Public Opinion Battle

Peru - Approval Rating, %



Source: Peru 21, Fitch Solutions

## BRAZIL & SOUTHERN CONE

### ARGENTINA | POLITICS & ECONOMY

#### A nasty job almost done?

The Argentine government led by President Mauricio Macri is only one step away from securing approval for an austere and unpopular but International Monetary Fund (IMF)-approved 2019 budget. The government has succeeded in pushing its proposed budget through the opposition-controlled federal chamber of deputies. Securing the approval of such a budget could be described as a politically thankless task, but it is one the Macri government cannot shirk.

The budget debate in the chamber of deputies began at 11:00pm local time on 24 October after an afternoon of sometimes-violent protests by civil society groups opposed to the proposed budget cuts outside the congress building in central Buenos Aires. The debate went on through the night and into the morning of 25 October. There were also disturbances inside the lower chamber as government and opposition deputies traded insults and in at least one case threatened to settle differences by “going outside” for a fist fight. The debate had to be suspended temporarily to restore calm.

However, in the end the Macri executive and the centre-right ruling Cambiemos coalition had victory. At 5:47am local time the chamber finally voted on the proposed budget, with the bill being approved with 138 votes in favour, 103 against, and eight abstentions. The approval of the bill was achieved as 32 opposition deputies, mostly from moderate factions of the main opposition Partido Justicialista (PJ, Peronists), voted along with the minority Cambiemos bench in support of the bill. The bill now passes to the senate for approval.

The 2019 budget is a poison pill – politically toxic, but in the eyes of its supporters, still necessary and essential medicine for the country. The budget flows from Argentina’s US\$56.7bn Stand-By Agreement (SBA) with the IMF. Its main feature is an accelerated programme to eliminate the fiscal deficit by cutting spending and increasing taxes.

The prospect it holds out for 2019, an election year, is less than rosy. If things go well (and not everyone thinks they will go well) inflation will reduce from nearly 40% this year to 23% next year; the economy will contract by 2% this year and by another 0.5% in 2019.

Cambiemos’ pitch is that these painful adjustments are necessary to get some kind of a return to the good times: a growing economy in 2020. The opposition’s pitch is that austerity hasn’t worked in the past (Argentina has a long history of failed IMF adjustment programmes); and won’t work in the future. It is simply, the critics say, a way for the rich to prosper at the expense of the poor. The former economy minister and current PJ Deputy, Axel Kicillof (2013-2015), described the draft budget during the debate in the chamber of deputies as “unvotable, a budget of austerity, of indebtedness and social exclusion, both anti-national and anti-federal”.

In this battle at least, the government appears to have the upper hand, thanks to an agreement with 12 opposition provincial governors. In addition, to gain support from legislators representing rural areas, the government has softened its proposed taxes on agricultural exports (suggesting some might be offset against profit tax). Lined up against the budget are the Frente para la Victoria (FPV) hard-line PJ faction that is loyal to former president and incumbent senator, Cristina Fernández (2007-2015); the more moderate Frente Renovador (FR) PJ faction led by Deputy Sergio Massa; socialists; and the Trotskyite Frente de Izquierda (FIT). These groups will now try to stop the budget’s approval in the senate.

The road ahead for the Macri government remains difficult. Outside congress it can expect more strikes and demonstrations against austerity. In an ideal world it hopes to get senate approval for the budget before mid-November. The big battle will of course be for hearts and minds in the run-up to the October 2019 general election. In recent history no Argentine president has secured re-election when the economy has contracted in the last year of the presidential term. In 1989, 1999, and 2015 the incumbents’ hopes of re-election were dashed by a falling economy. Macri will struggle to reverse that precedent.

## The military's return to national politics?

### New military leadership

The incoming president will be responsible for naming the new commanders of Brazil's army, air force and marines. The armed forces agree that the future commanders will need to work to contain the politicisation of the barracks, as well as prevent government intervention within the armed forces or vice-versa. The nomination of the future military leadership could be complicated by the fact that many of the possible contenders have personal links to presidential frontrunner Jair Bolsonaro and his inner circle.

Jair Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain, looks set to become Brazil's next president. He is expected to usher in a government heavily biased towards the military, a prospect which worries Brazilians who fear a return to the ways of the country's 1964-1985 military dictatorship.

A core group within Bolsonaro's inner circle reflects his military training and open admiration of the armed forces. His running mate, Antonio Hamilton Mourão, is a recently-retired general who was part of the military high command and has repeatedly shocked sectors of the Brazilian public with his authoritarian comments.

At least three other retired generals are expected to be part of a future Bolsonaro government. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, once touted as a possible running mate, is tipped to become defence minister; Alessio Ribeiro Souto would be education minister; and Oswaldo Ferreira, infrastructure & transportation minister. The three ex-soldiers are also key figures in the so-called 'grupo de Brasília', a group of both former military officials and civilians that has reportedly been working on shaping Bolsonaro's government plan.

The 7 October legislative elections bore witness to the increased presence of the military and security forces in Brazilian politics. At least 38 former soldiers, police officers, and firefighters were elected to congress, 17 of whom belong to Bolsonaro's Partido Social Liberal (PSL). Six elected PSL deputies are former members of the army specifically (including two retired generals). Mourão has been encouraging them to lead the creation of a military congressional bloc to push their agenda, which includes the revocation of Brazil's 2003 Disarmament Statute, to facilitate civilian possession of firearms. Such a bloc would be distinct from the existing public security caucus ('bancada da bala'), which is expected to grow its ranks in the incoming congress.

The armed forces are Brazil's most respected institution – 78% of the population trusts them to some degree according to a June 2018 Datafolha poll, whereas only 31% trusts congress. However, their politicisation (which began under current president Michel Temer, who appointed two army generals to his government) has caused alarm in some quarters. Recent incidents have fuelled fears that the military could intervene in the country's democratic institutions. This week, videos were posted online in which a retired army colonel attacks Rosa Weber, the president of the electoral court (TSE), and the judiciary in general, while defending Bolsonaro. The army has confirmed the identity of colonel Carlos Alves but has disassociated itself from his comments and said that they cannot verify the authenticity of the videos.

The armed forces are not unequivocally enthusiastic about being represented in the person and government of Bolsonaro. Although there is clear support for him amongst lower-ranking officials, generals within the army's high command have insisted that the armed forces are politically neutral and have tried to dissociate themselves from Bolsonaro's candidacy, as well as from other (ex)military politicians.

According to inside sources heard by national daily *Folha de São Paulo*, there are fears that some of Bolsonaro's decisions could backfire and reflect badly on the armed forces, which are enjoying their current levels of popular support. There are also points on which the army believes it differs from Bolsonaro. *Folha's* source disagrees with Bolsonaro's talk of waiving trials for military police officers who kill while on duty, saying that as well as being judicially incorrect, it wrongly implies that the army would like carte blanche to kill.

**Bolsonaro poised for likely victory**

**“On Sunday we are going to win.” It was not presidential frontrunner Jair Bolsonaro, but his opponent Fernando Haddad who tweeted this with less than a week to go before the second round of Brazil’s presidential election, on 28 October. While the election was initially described as the most uncertain in Brazil’s recent history, the result of the run-off has seemed set in stone from the moment the first-round results were revealed. And it is not expected to be in Haddad’s favour.**

Haddad’s show of sanguine optimism appears to have been prompted by the release of Ibope’s latest poll, which registered a slight decline in support for Bolsonaro. Haddad, who represents the oft-hated Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), saw his high rejection rates drop six percentage points to 41%, while Bolsonaro’s rose to 40% (from 35%). The percentage of the electorate that is certain that it will cast its vote for Bolsonaro, candidate for the Partido Social Liberal (PSL), has dropped slightly to 37%, from 41%. The change in voting intentions is minimal however and remains within the poll’s margin of error, with Bolsonaro expected to receive 57% of the valid vote and Haddad, 43% (Ibope’s last poll predicted 59%-41%).

Demonstrations which took place last weekend show that popular support for Bolsonaro remains strong. Anti-Bolsonaro protests on 21 October were less widespread and smaller than the pro-Bolsonaro rallies the next day. In what has become his signature campaign move, Bolsonaro joined his supporters on the Avenida Paulista in São Paulo virtually via video link shared on social media. He spoke of re-building Brazil and of purging the country of left-wing “outlaws” by expelling them or sending them to prison, in an inflammatory speech which was met with cheers from his green-and-yellow clad supporters. Recent revelations around an allegedly illegally-funded ‘fake news’ campaign and controversial comments about the judiciary made by one of Bolsonaro’s sons may have caused outrage amongst Brazil’s media and political elite, but their impact on his voters appears to have been minimal.

Bolsonaro’s speech has however prompted renewed calls for the Brazilian electorate to side with democracy in the face of authoritarianism. These have come from many sides, including former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002), whose Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB) has traditionally represented the opposition to the PT. Another former PSDB leader, Alberto Goldman, has publicly announced that he will vote for Haddad (rather than spoil his ballot) following Bolsonaro’s speech. Defeated presidential candidate Marina Silva also announced her “critical vote” for Haddad this week, despite having previously said she would remain neutral.

Comments made by Bolsonaro’s son Eduardo, who was re-elected federal deputy for São Paulo state on 7 October, have been one of the latest causes of concern. In a video dating from July but shared widely online on 21 October, Eduardo makes light of shutting down the country’s supreme court (STF), saying that it would be easy to do so with just two soldiers if the court blocked a Bolsonaro victory. Condemnation of these comments has been widespread, with STF president Justice José Antonio Dias Toffoli saying that a threat to the judiciary is a threat to democracy. Bolsonaro father and son have both made public apologies, highlighting their respect for the STF as a judicial institution committed to upholding the constitution, and said that the comments were taken out of context. There have been calls, including from within the STF, for Eduardo to be investigated for breaching the national security law.

**Governorship**

Pro-Jair Bolsonaro candidate Wilson Witzel looks set to defeat former Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes and become the next governor for Rio de Janeiro state with 56% of the valid vote. The race is closer in São Paulo state, where João Doria’s slim advantage on Márcio França could be affected by a recently leaked sex tape, which Doria claims is fake. Although he represents the Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB), Doria openly admires and backs Bolsonaro.



## 'Fake news' intervention

Facebook and WhatsApp have reaffirmed their commitment to fighting fake news in the wake of revelations that the social media and messaging platforms could have played an important role in influencing voters in Brazil. On 22 October Facebook shut down 68 pages and 43 accounts for violating its authenticity and spam policies. WhatsApp has said that it will block phone numbers associated with bad practices, but that it has no plans to lower the limit on the number of people a message can be forwarded on to.

## 'Zapgate'

This controversy came on the back of revelations made by national daily *Folha de São Paulo* which further tainted Bolsonaro's campaign. According to *Folha's* investigation, wealthy pro-Bolsonaro businessmen have been paying for mass fake news campaigns that are damaging to Haddad to be sent out to millions of voters via WhatsApp. As well as bringing into question the legitimacy of the election results, such practices could constitute electoral crimes. The purchase of these mass messaging packages by private companies is essentially corporate campaign financing, a practice which was made illegal in 2015.

Electoral court (TSE) judge Jorge Mussi has accepted requests to investigate Bolsonaro for electoral crimes, including abuse of economic power, that were filed by the PT's electoral coalition, the left-wing Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT), and the PDT's coalition in the wake of these revelations. At the request of attorney general Raquel Dodge, the federal police (PF) has also launched an investigation into the mass messaging schemes.

Judicial experts say that if Bolsonaro is found guilty, it could go as far as to impede his presidency even if he does get elected on 28 October. However, these types of investigations tend to take months and even years, and it is most likely that 'Zapgate', as some Brazilians have dubbed it (after the commonly used abbreviation for WhatsApp), will do little more than cause some noise for the PSL candidate.

With the traditional final presidential debate broadcast by national TV channel *Globo* cancelled after Bolsonaro refused to participate, Haddad and Bolsonaro will continue their parallel campaigns and online exchanges without meeting in person ahead of the run-off on Sunday. Haddad continues his desperate canvass for votes while Bolsonaro, certain of victory, appears to already be planning his future government and laying the ground for possible alliances.

## CHILE | POLITICS

### Piñera still looking in rear-view mirror

However much he keeps talking about the future, President Sebastián Piñera cannot seem to escape the past in Chile. Almost every other week a controversy surrounding the military dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) seems to rear its head. On this occasion it was not Piñera's own doing but he could be held indirectly responsible.

Colonel Germán Villarroel, director of Chile's Escuela Militar, and Colonel Miguel Krassnoff Bassa, the director of the military Escuela de Idiomas language school, were both pushed into retirement last week after the latter gave a speech paying homage to his father Brigadier General Miguel Krassnoff Marchenko, sentenced to 668 years in prison for human rights violations committed during the Pinochet dictatorship. Krassnoff Bassa extolled "the bravery, loyalty, and uprightness" of Krassnoff Marchenko, notorious for being one of the most violent torturers of Pinochet's secret police (Dina).

During a prize-giving ceremony at a sports competition in the Escuela Militar, the military academy, on 6 October, Miguel Krassnoff Bassa paid tribute to his father and praised the support of Villarroel, who apparently knew about the subject matter of his speech in advance. "It is super important that our parents, who gave their lives for Chile and their families, are always in your hearts," Krassnoff Bassa said to the cadets "to remember the soldiers that are not always remembered".

## Mapuche protest march

Another area regarding human rights where President Piñera has come under fire is the Mapuche conflict. On 14 October thousands of demonstrators marched in Santiago in support of the Mapuche cause and to demand the release of “indigenous political prisoners”.

Demonstrators carried large banners calling for the release of Mapuche activists (many imprisoned for arson attacks on lorries and churches in the southern region of La Araucanía). The Mapuche conflict is a vexed issue which successive Chilean governments have done their level best to ignore but Piñera has taken it head on with a multifaceted development plan for La Araucanía, although he has been accused by the Mapuche of prioritising the militarisation of the region and stiffening the anti-terrorism law.

A video of the speech was not made public until last week when a deluge of criticism forced the army to take action, shunting Villarroel and Krassnoff Bassa into retirement. General Miguel Alfonso Bellet, the army commander, said the two men had caused “very serious harm” to the institution. In a public declaration he said that the army “is and always will be respectful of judicial resolutions”. The defence minister, Alberto Espina, had described the speech as “unacceptable” and demanded an investigation to establish responsibility.

Human rights organisations are calling for further sanctions for the two colonels. Chile’s human rights commission, and groups of relatives of the disappeared and executed politicians, the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD) and Agrupación de Familiares de Ejecutados Políticos (AFEP) respectively, complained that Espina pushing the two men into retirement was “weak” and that what had happened in the Escuela Militar called into question the ‘never again’ proclamation from the army several years ago.

“The question that arises is what type of training are they getting in the military academy? Is it denial and defence of crimes against humanity? Or commitment to democratic values and respect for human rights? These questions need to be asked in a public debate,” the president of the human rights commission, Carlos Margotta, asked rhetorically, adding that sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the incident were imperative.

Another question surrounds the timing of Krassnoff Bassa’s remarks. While it is true that he was close to retirement, and perhaps saw this as a last opportunity to speak his mind without fear of the consequences, it is questionable whether he would have spoken at all if the left-leaning Nueva Mayoría coalition were still in power, or whether Villarroel would have given him the go-ahead. By contrast, President Piñera’s right-of-centre Chile Vamos government’s recent actions could have given the impression that it would be possible to get away with these remarks now.

Heightened political tensions over the origins of the dictatorship and Chile’s democratic history have dogged Piñera since he returned to power for a second term. During his first term, in 2013, he upset the ultra-right by closing the Peñal Cordillera, essentially a luxury enclosure for those who committed human rights violations during the dictatorship, and transferred the inmates to Punta Peuco, a less comfortable military prison. He had also condemned civilians complicit in the military abuses as “passive accomplices”.

Since returning to power in March this year, however, Piñera has made a discernible shift to the Right rhetorically, focusing not on human rights abuses under the dictatorship but rather the democratic abuses by the Left which he argues brought it about. In August, Piñera called for the creation of a ‘museum of democracy’, accusing the government under President Salvador Allende (1970-1973) of having “validated violence and undemocratic mechanisms” [WR-18-33]. Days earlier, his choice of culture minister, Mauricio Rojas, was compelled to resign just four days into the job after facing scathing criticism for past remarks about the museum of memory and human rights in Santiago.

Piñera kept a studied silence for several days after Krassnoff Bassa’s remarks became public. When he eventually broke it, Piñera was critical. “I don’t think it’s appropriate that in a military complex where future officials of our country are educated homage is paid to people who violated human rights for such a long time and in such a cruel and systematic way”. He added that it was “very important in Chile to educate about the culture of respect for human rights”. But human rights activists and left-wing politicians accused him of too little too late.

**Military pension approved against tense backdrop**

Congress has approved a reform of the *Caja Militar*, the military pension, in a protracted process which has been the source of serious friction between the left-wing Frente Amplio (FA) government led by President Tabaré Vázquez and the armed forces. The bill passed through the lower chamber of congress just days after Carlos Silva, the president of the association of active and retired officers *Centro Militar*, maintained that conditions were ripe in Uruguay for the military to take power again due to what he described as a dearth of democracy in the country.

Reform of the *Caja Militar* has been under discussion since before President Vázquez returned to power for a second term in 2015. It currently drains state coffers of some US\$550m a year, a figure set to rise to US\$700m by 2020, while the social security bank (BPS) registered a deficit of US\$582m in 2017 [WR-18-38]. The pension reform will not impact military officers with more than 15 years of service, while those with fewer years of service will see a phased change with employer contributions increasing from 15% to 19.5% (in line with the rest of the public sector) and personal contributions increasing from 13% to 15%.

Three small amendments made by deputies mean the reform must go back to the senate for final approval, although the FA's majority should ensure this is a straightforward process. Vázquez rejected an appeal by more left-wing parties within the FA, such as the *Partido Comunista de Uruguay* (PCU), to reduce the military pension thresholds.

Vázquez handed down the top disciplinary sanction to the army commander, General Guido Manini Ríos, for his outspoken criticism of the pension reform last month. Manini Ríos was confined to his private residence for 30 days outside of working hours, but concluded the sanction three days early on 15 October after successfully appealing to Vázquez to allow him to fly to Spain to attend a ceremony to mark the 'Día de la Hispanidad', a visit authorised before the application of the sanction.

The whole military pension debate has poisoned relations between the armed forces and the government. It was against this backdrop that Silva, a retired colonel rather than a serving officer, but one holding an influential position at the head of the *Centro Militar*, made his intemperate remarks in an interview with the local online publication *Montevideo Portal* on 11 October. When asked whether he would like to see the military back in power, Silva side-stepped the question by saying that what he would like to see is politicians "doing what they have to do" and the military carrying out their own duties. "This is logical but it is not happening," Silva went on, adding that the military could take power "when democracy is not being respected, like now".

Silva went on to dismiss the defence minister, Jorge Menéndez, as "an incompetent bureaucrat". But perhaps his most incendiary remarks came in relation to the military dictatorship (1973-1985), which he described as "just a power vacuum" which was the fault of the politicians at the time "who did not know how to manage the situation". Silva added that the search for people who 'disappeared' during the dictatorship was "a waste of public resources".

Several human rights organisations filed a suit against Silva with the attorney general's office last week. He now stands accused of apology for crime. Relatives of the disappeared gathered outside the attorney general's office to demand that justice be served.

The question troubling the Vázquez administration must be to what point Silva's words are an expression of his own personal sentiment and to what extent they reflect the opinions of active members of the armed forces.

**Military corruption**

General John Griffiths, the second-in-command of the Chilean army, was granted bail by a military court on fraud allegations on 18 October. Griffiths had resigned his position two days earlier. He stands accused of alleged irregularities between 2009 and 2014 in relation to five separate trips to the US, accompanied by his family, for which he claimed C1\$44m (US\$65,000) in expenses.

**López Obrador's plans for Pemex disconcert****Market uncertainty**

Following Fitch Ratings' 19 October announcement that it was revising its outlook on Pemex's credit rating, the Mexican peso fell 0.79% against the US dollar. This was sharpest fall in the value of the peso since September and reverted the recent gains that the peso had made on the US dollar in recent weeks. The negative reaction in the currency markets to Fitch's announcement led the local analysts like James Salazar from CI Banco to call on the López Obrador administration to continue to "carefully manage" Pemex's finances once it assumes office to avoid further volatility.

The recent announcement by Mexico's President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador that one of his incoming government's objectives is for Mexico to stop exporting crude oil has produced concern among economic and financial analysts. They have warned that such a move would negatively impact the state-owned oil firm, Pemex, as well as Mexico's finances. The warnings have increased market uncertainty, which López Obrador and his government transition team are now at pains to dispel.

López Obrador made his announcement about Mexico's oil exports during a visit to the oil producing state of Tabasco last week. Addressing a political rally, López Obrador reiterated that, in his view, Mexico's oil industry is in crisis due to the chronic mismanagement of Pemex by successive governments and that his incoming administration will implement a plan to "rescue" it. López Obrador proceeded to again criticise Mexico's 2013-2014 energy sector reform, which opened up the national oil industry to increased private sector participation, complaining that despite the reform and the promises that this would result in increased production at Pemex, production levels at Pemex have continued to fall in the last two years. He insisted that this would change once he assumes office, as he administration will ramp up investment in oil exploration and production efforts.

The president-elect has made all of these claims before. However, this time López Obrador went further and said that his plan to save Mexico's oil industry also involved reducing oil extraction in general and to concentrate on supplying the domestic market rather than exporting crude. He explained that his government will seek not to extract "too much oil" in order to leave an inheritance to future generations and to gradually wean Mexico off its dependence on oil. "We will only extract what is needed for internal consumption.... We will no longer sell oil, in the medium term, abroad; we want to process our own raw material," López Obrador explained. López Obrador has previously said that his government's plan for the oil sector involves increasing Pemex's refining capacity by building new refineries so that Pemex could meet the domestic demand for refined petrol fuels and not have to rely on imports.

López Obrador even went as far as setting a clear oil production target. "We need to produce around 2.5m barrels a day; that is our goal, not producing 3.24m barrels as in 2003 and 2004," López Obrador said in allusion to the last oil production peak recorded by Pemex and noting that the firm is currently producing 1.8m barrels a day. He was also adamant that hydrocarbons are a non-renewable energy source that needs to be adequately managed; and that instead of extracting "excessive" amounts of oil, his government will seek to promote the use and development of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar energy.

The talk about shifting the Mexico's oil industry model from one focused on crude extraction to one more focused on the refining of crude had already led some local analysts to note that such a change in strategy could be detrimental to the country's finances at time when international crude prices are once again on the rise. Unsurprisingly, López Obrador's proposal to stop all oil exports was greeted with further concern. Analysts fretted that cutting out crude exports would remove a significant source of revenue for Pemex and the Mexican state upsetting national finances. Pointedly, just a few days after López Obrador's remarks in Tabasco, international credit rating's agency Moody's Investor Service released a note on 18 October warning that the proposal to stop oil exports would negatively impact Pemex.

## Disagreement over IEPS

In addition to the worries over President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador's plans to abolish oil exports, the announcement by his designated energy minister, Rocío Nahle García, of plans to reduce the special tax on petrol fuels (IEPS) to lower the price of petrol fuels for the benefit the general population has also produced concern. Analysts warned that such a move would only further reduce government revenue and weaken public finances. This view was shared by the outgoing energy minister, Pedro Joaquín Coldwell, who has told federal legislators that reducing the IEPS would "leave a hole in the public finances" that the López Obrador government will find hard to fill and that this could "put the country's credit rating at risk".

The Moody's note states that under López Obrador's proposals Pemex's "cashflow would decline and become more volatile under new refining-focused business model". It adds that "Pemex would be exposed to greater foreign exchange volatility since its income from fuel sales would be in Mexican pesos, while 87% of its US\$104bn debt as of June 2018 is in US dollars or other hard currencies.... The new plan could also force Pemex to import crude, which would add to its cash-flow and foreign-exchange risk...[with] the risk of Pemex posting lower operating cash flow within the next three years even greater considering the upward momentum on crude prices." Moody's also pointed out that the Mexican state would also lose revenue equivalent to 2% of GDP, which would "substantially widen Mexico's fiscal deficit" unless the government could find alternative sources of revenue or abandons its pledge of fiscal discipline.

Moody's was not alone in flagging up the potential pitfalls of López Obrador's proposed change of strategy for Pemex. On 19 October fellow international credit ratings agency Fitch Ratings responded to the proposals by revising its outlook on Pemex's 'BBB+' credit rating from 'stable' to 'negative'. In a statement, Fitch explained that its decision "reflects the increased uncertainty about Pemex's future business strategy coupled with the company's deteriorating standalone credit profile". The statement adds that "Future potential changes in Pemex's business strategy could accelerate the weakening of the company's capital structure."

The downwards revision of Pemex's credit rating outlook by Fitch was ill received by the government transition team. López Obrador's designated energy minister, Rocío Nahle García, said that she "did not understand" what Fitch was referring to when talking about uncertainty over Pemex's business model; and that the decision to revise the firm's credit rating outlook based on this was "absurd". However, Mexico's political opposition has said that the warnings issued by the international credit rating agencies and Nahle's reaction to it show that López and Obrador and his government team don't have a coherent and convincing strategy for Pemex and Mexico's oil industry.

## TRACKING TRENDS

**MEXICO | Shoring up ties with Canada.** On 22 October seven members of Mexico's President-elect Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government transition team travelled to Ottawa, Canada, to hold meetings with Canadian government officials.

The Mexican delegation was led by López Obrador's designated foreign minister, Marcelo Ebrard, who said that the trip answered to the fact that the incoming López Obrador administration is interested in strengthening bilateral ties with Canada. After holding a meeting with Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, Ebrard said that the two had discussed migration policy, economic issues, and Canada's experience with the legalisation of cannabis. This after the legislation legalising the recreational use of marijuana came into effect in Canada on 17 October. The legalisation of recreational marijuana is something that has been recently mooted in Mexico as a measure that could help reduce the violence in the country linked to illegal drug trafficking. Meanwhile, López Obrador's designated economy minister, Graciela Márquez Colín, met with Canada's International Trade Diversification Minister James Carr to discuss trade relations. The meeting between Márquez and Carr comes after on 11 October Canada announced the imposition of a 25% import tariff on a series of steel products from 25 October. The Canadian government said that the measure is aimed at protecting Canadian steel producers from any attempt by international producers to flood Canada's steel market following the US's decision to impose a similar tariff back in May. However, the outgoing Mexican government reacted to the announcement by issuing a statement in which it lamented the decision and noting that it may be in breach of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta). Consequently, the statement says that the Mexican government will take all the necessary actions to protect Mexican exporters in the short-term and resort to any mechanisms available in Nafta and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to exclude Mexico from the safeguarding measures adopted by Canada.

## Congress delivers further blow to anti-impunity efforts

Guatemala's 158-member unicameral national legislature has recently delivered two major blows to anti-impunity efforts. Last week, for a third time, it voted not to strip President Jimmy Morales of immunity from prosecution, thus preventing his investigation for illegal electoral financing of the ruling Frente de Convergencia Nacional (FCN-Nación) party in the 2015 general election campaign. It then approved changes to the criminal code which, among other things, absolve political parties' general secretaries of criminal responsibility for illegal electoral campaign funds received by their parties. These latest moves by congress come as transparency concerns remain rife following Morales' recent decision not to renew the mandate of the United Nations-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (Cicig) when it expires in September 2019, and bar its director, Iván Velásquez [[WR-18-37](#)].

On 16 October the legislature voted by 79 in favour of President Morales preserving his immunity from prosecution, having similarly opted to protect him on two previous occasions in September 2017. The legislature's latest vote had followed the approval by the supreme court (CSJ) of a request put forward by Cicig and the attorney general's office (AG) in line with a new complaint received by the AG back in February, which claimed that, as FCN-Nación secretary general, Morales had omitted to report some Q7.9m (US\$1.05m) in funds.

With the country since distracted by the migrant caravan crisis (*see pages one and two*) two days later, congress approved changes to the criminal code. These not only exonerate political parties' general secretaries of responsibility for allegations of illegal campaign financing but reduce the penalty for unregistered political contributions and anonymous financing to one to five years in prison, down from four to 12. Again, congress sought to make these changes the previous year although they were suspended by the constitutional court (CC) on the grounds that they could cause "irreparable damage to the justice system". The CC's decision was in line with appeals filed by the human rights ombudsman, Augusto Jordán Rodas Andrade, and civil-society groups such as local branch of international NGO Transparency International (TI), Acción Ciudadana, and the latter has filed a further complaint with regard to the latest vote.

### Going after Aldana?

Earlier this month former AG Thelma Aldana (2014-2018), who, along with Velásquez was instrumental in the investigations which produced the call for President Morales to be investigated (*see sidebar*), issued a public statement in which she claimed to be the victim of calumny. She also denounced "illegal attempts to subject her to judicial proceedings" by a group of legislators "linked to various illicit cases..."

With speculation rife as to whether she will run as a presidential candidate in the 2019 general election, Aldana's statement follows claims by a national legislator, Juan Ramón Lau (of the opposition Todos party), of anomalies surrounding the purchase of a building for the AG. According to Lau, the building was overvalued by more than Q8m (US\$1m) in a procedure which violated state procurement legislation, according to an investigation by a legislative investigating committee. Meanwhile Aldana's reference to legislators "linked to various illicit cases" is believed to be an allusion to congress vice president Felipe Alejos, also from Todos, who set up the

### Baldetti

Indicative of progress in efforts to address impunity, achieved under the watch of former attorney general, Thelma Aldana, most recently on 9 October former Vice President Roxana Baldetti (2012-2015) received a prison sentence of 15 years and six months for charges of illicit association, fraud, and influence trafficking. The case, which came to light in 2015, regards a project to clean up Lake Amatitlán for which an Israeli company, M Tarcic Engineering, received a Q\$137.8m (US\$18m) contract. Baldetti was forced to resign, along with president Otto Pérez Molina (2012-2015), over another corruption scandal – again the fruit of efforts by Aldana and Cicig's director Iván Velásquez (who both received a human rights award from the US-based think-tank Washington Office on Latin America, last month).

congressional investigating commission in the first place. Alejos has been implicated in an influence-trafficking scandal involving the tax authorities, which made headlines at the start of the year.

## HAITI | POLITICS

### Moïse forced to address Petrocaribe scandal

This week Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse replaced two key allies – his chief of staff Wilson Laleau and the general secretary to the presidency Yves Germain Joseph. Both have been implicated in the scandal involving the alleged misuse of some US\$2bn in funds from Petrocaribe, Venezuela's discounted oil initiative, which took place between September 2008 and September 2016 and came to light earlier in the year [[WR-18-09](#)]. His hand was forced after the biggest anti-corruption protests since the start of his mandate in February 2017 took place last week, indicative of what remains a major complaint of his government.

On 17 October thousands of Haitians took to the streets across the country, in key cities like the capital Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien (Nord department), Gonaïves and San Marcos (Artibonite), Petit-Goâve (Ouest), Les Cayes (Sud), and Ouanaminthe (Nord-est). The protests left two dead on media reports and dozens injured – including a police officer who tried to intervene after President Moïse (who escaped unscathed) was shot at while placing a wreath at an event held in the capital, marking the 212<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the first leader of independent Haiti.

The protests were organised by the recently launched 'Petrochallenge' anti-corruption movement, which emerged after the senate passed a resolution earlier this year requesting that the superior court of audit and administrative disputes (CSC/CA) conduct a review of Petrocaribe funds, over the eight-year period which spans the governments led by René Préval (2006-2011) and Moïse's predecessor and political mentor Michel Martelly (2011-2016) (*see sidebar*). The protest movement has also been fuelled by transparency concerns regarding top officials which ultimately proved decisive in forcing Jack Guy Lafontant to step down as prime minister back in July [[WR-18-28](#)].

#### Other measures

As well as the decision to replace Laleau and Germain (with Nahomme Dorvil, a former vice president of Haiti's chamber of trade and industry and Jean Hibert Lebrun, reportedly a core member of Moïse's inner circle, respectively), the government has announced further measures to address concerns stemming from the Petrocaribe scandal. On 22 October Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant announced plans to establish an independent commission, tasked with further investigating the findings of the senate report. Comprising representatives from various sectors – including Petrochallenge and other civil-society groups, the media, universities, religious organisations, and the private sector – the commission is due to select a foreign company to trace the Petrocaribe funds and identify what became of them.

#### Earthquake

The continued focus on the transparency of public funds comes as the Haitian government is under pressure to address the effects of a 5.9 magnitude earthquake which struck the country on 6 October.

According to the most recent (20 October) report by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), 18 fatalities and 548 injured have been confirmed, 11,134 families have been affected, and an estimated 55,670 people need humanitarian assistance. In terms of infrastructure, 1,417 houses have been destroyed while 9,717 houses are damaged, as well as at least 70 schools which are destroyed or damaged.

#### Petrocaribe

The senate commission found that most of the money had been wasted and mismanaged, in what it deemed a "large scale state fraud", concluding that "Petrocaribe has been the object of embezzlement". As well as Wilson Laleu (who previously held the portfolios of trade & industry and economy & finance), Yves Germain Joseph (a former planning minister), former presidents René Préval and Michel Martelly, and an energy company, Comphener SA, owned by President Jovenel Moïse, also featured in the report.

### Quotes of the week

“To migrate is a human right....Our solidarity with the march.”

*El Salvador's President Salvador Sánchez Cerén expresses support for the caravan of Honduran migrants which set off for the US ten days ago via Mexico and Guatemala.*

“A presidential candidate asking people to adjust to his thinking or pay the price: prison or exile. It's a reminder from other times.”

*Brazil's former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) in reference to a recent speech by presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro.*

“It is a hard road, but we know that the real historic change in Argentina will come when voters choose not to punish the government for the financial costs of the populist party.”

*Luciano Laspina, the head of the congressional budget commission in Argentina's federal chamber of deputies, defends the draft budget presented by the government led by President Mauricio Macri by alluding to the excess spending under the previous administration.*

### Demobilised Farc leaders avoid falling foul of JEP

Colombia's transitional justice court (JEP) has announced that it has received official documentation from many of the 31 former leaders of the demobilised Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Farc) guerrillas who it had called to provide information related to kidnapping and enforced disappearance cases in which they have been implicated. Among those who have submitted documentation to the court are high-ranking former Farc leaders who have recently gone into hiding after complaining that the peace deal that they signed with the government is not being respected. That these individuals have remained in contact with the JEP is an encouraging sign that they have not yet completely abandoned the peace process.

The JEP had given 31 former Farc leaders until 23 October to present it with any information they had about kidnapping and enforced disappearance cases that they had been implicated in so that it could try to resolve their cases. Among those called to submit information were the Farc's second in command Luciano Marín Arango ('Iván Márquez'), who disappeared from public view after the authorities arrested fellow former Farc leader Seuxis Paucias Hernández ('Jesús Santrich') in April on the back of an extradition request from the US for drug trafficking offences committed after the signing of the peace deal. Márquez and other former Farc commanders argue that Santrich's arrest and likely extradition violates the terms of the agreed peace deal.

The disappearance from public view of Márquez and other Farc commanders sparked concerns that they had gone back to join the dissident guerrilla groups that did not adhere to the peace process or even to try to launch a new insurrection. However, after the passing of the deadline, the JEP announced that it had received documentation from 18 of former Farc commanders, while nine more submitted formal requests requesting a deadline extension to respond to the court. A JEP statement noted that among those that got in contact with the court was Márquez. The JEP said that it would now verify all the documentation it has received before deciding how to proceed.

Following the JEP's announcement Colombia's high commissioner for peace, Miguel Ceballos, called on Márquez to appear before the JEP to confirm his ongoing commitment to the peace process. "Márquez was the Farc's chief peace negotiator...it would be wrong for him not to show up and respect the transitional justice system that they agreed to create," Ceballos said during a press conference. Ceballos went on to say that it is "fundamental" for the peace process that Márquez and any other Farc commander summoned by the JEP to appear before the court and accept its judgement.

---

**LATIN AMERICAN WEEKLY REPORT** is published weekly (50 issues a year) by **Latin American Newsletters**, Hamilton House, Fourth Floor, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9BB, England. Telephone +44 (0)203 695 2790, Email: subs@latinnews.com or visit our website at: <http://www.latinnews.com>. **EDITOR: JON FARMER**. Subscription rates will be sent on request. Overseas subscription sent by airmail. Printed by Quorum Print Services Limited, Unit 3, Lansdown Industrial Estate, Gloucester Road, Cheltenham, Glos. GL51 8PL **COPYRIGHT © 2018** in all countries. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, electrical, chemical, mechanical, optical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers. Registered as a newspaper by Royal Mail. **REFERENCES:** Back references and cross-references in the current series will be made thus: WR-18-01 will indicate Weekly Report, 2018, issue 1.