



BRIEF //  
GLOBAL PLURALISM MONITOR

# Colombia

In 2021, the [Global Centre for Pluralism](#) worked with Colombian experts to produce the [Global Pluralism Monitor](#) assessment for Colombia. The Global Pluralism Monitor is a tool to help policy leaders, educators and community builders, among others, to identify and build more inclusive policies and practices across all sectors of their society. The Monitor's recommendations for Colombia provide pathways to strengthen pluralism at a pivotal moment. The report highlights areas where swift action by the new government could produce transformative results, helping to achieve a more secure and inclusive society for all Colombians.

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## WHY PLURALISM?

At the Global Centre for Pluralism, we believe that societies thrive when differences are valued. While diversity in society is a universal fact, how societies respond to diversity is a choice.

When societies commit to becoming more just, peaceful and prosperous by respecting diversity and addressing systemic inequality, the impacts can be transformational. For instance, full citizenship rights become more accessible, and marginalized groups see their grievances addressed by more inclusive policies and practices. When the dignity of every individual is recognized, everyone feels they belong and we are all better off, for generations to come.

## GLOBAL PLURALISM MONITOR

Our work supports policy leaders, educators and community builders around the world to address injustice, inequality and exclusion in their communities. The Global Pluralism Monitor is a tool to help these actors, among others, to identify and build more inclusive policies and practices across all sectors of their society.

The Monitor's country assessments are conducted by a team of experts on diversity issues who are either country nationals or have significant experience in the country. In consultation with the Centre, the team identifies key issues to include in the report to offer the most salient picture of the state of pluralism in the country. Important considerations are made, including whether there is an urgent need to bring international visibility to specific issues or communities.

Each team of experts is encouraged to define the story *they* want to tell about pluralism in their country. In this way, the reports are grounded in local realities and designed to have the most potential impact on policy and practice.

### Monitor Assessment Framework:

ROOTED IN THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL RESPONSES, THE FRAMEWORK MEASURES INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION ACROSS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS.

Its 20 indicators cover:

- Legal commitments in support of pluralism;
- Practices by state institutions to realize commitments;
- Leadership towards pluralism from societal actors;
- State of group-based inequalities;
- Intergroup relations and belonging.

## KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN COLOMBIA

Colombia has many laws guaranteeing a wide array of rights that support pluralism. However, the state has either failed to implement or enforce these policies and laws, or has engaged in practices that directly contravene them. The Monitor's assessment of Colombia, conducted in 2021 by a team of experts, highlights the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, peasants and Roma populations to have their legal rights fully and meaningfully recognized.

### 1. Indigenous rights: Legal commitments fail to be implemented

Peasant identity has formed in direct response to state policies of exclusion and marginalization. Therefore, the first step in the recognition of a peasant identity is to guarantee the rights of this group under Colombian law. There has been some progress on this front with the formal recognition of peasant identity in law, inclusion in the census, and the development of identity rights in relation to land rights. However, as is the case with other diversity groups, implementation is lacking and many of these rights are routinely contravened.

### Key instruments for Indigenous people:

- Creation of associations of Indigenous authorities or *Cabildos*
- Titling of lands to Indigenous communities
- Promotion of ethno-education
- Creation of the National Commission on Indigenous Territories and the Permanent Roundtable for Negotiation

- Establishing the right to prior consultation
- Establishing the right to special political participation
- Recognition and protection of Indigenous languages
- Right to non-discrimination
- Rights of Indigenous victims of violence
- Creation of the National Commission of Indigenous Women

- Peasants experience conflict and crime at very high levels – 971 social leaders have been assassinated, 35% of whom were known to be peasants since the signing of the Peace Agreement until June 2020
- 75% of people in rural areas feel the justice system is failing them, which contributes to impunity for violence

## 2. Peasants: Implementation of identity rights must be accelerated

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### Issues facing the peasantry:

- Peasants experience almost twice the level of poverty as the general population
- Labour market in rural areas disadvantages women who face higher unemployment rates and lower access to social security

## 3. Afro-descendants: Lack of legislation results in marginalization and persecution

Legislation defining Afro-descendant rights is significantly narrower, or non-existent, compared to legislation for Indigenous communities. Colombia has signed but not ratified the Inter-American Convention Against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance. This signifies a lack of international accountability to its Afro-descendent communities. Colombia is among the few Latin American countries with a significantly high Afro-descendant population that has not invited the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent to conduct a country visit. The recognition of Afro-descendent rights internationally and nationally is vital in responding to the issues affecting this population.

### Issues facing Afro-descendants:

- 75% of the country's Afro-descendant population receives wages below the legal minimum.

- Life expectancy is 20% below the national average.
- Statistical decline of the Afro-descendant population by 30% in the national census in 2018 demonstrates a wilful data gap targeting a specific people. Analysts identify this drop as a statistical genocide.
- Afro-descendants constitute 14% of the total displaced population (number is likely higher)
- In 2015, 20% of *falsos positivos* (the assassination of civilians portrayed as combatants by the armed forces) took place in Colombia's Pacific region, where a large proportion of the Afro-descendant population lives.
- Between Jan. 1, 2018 and Aug. 31, 2018, at least 17% of the social leaders assassinated were Afro-descendant and 31% of murders took place in Colombia's Pacific region.

#### 4. Overall Data Gaps

Complete, accurate, accessible, and disaggregated data is an essential element in determining the state of pluralism in a country and the status of its diverse groups. In Colombia, there is a lack of data about access to human rights and disaggregated data related to victims of violence from different ethnic groups. The collection of this data is crucial in understanding and addressing practices that harm the most vulnerable groups.

#### ○ PROMISING PRACTICES FOR PLURALISM

The report identifies existing efforts and practices that can be used to advance pluralism in Colombia.

##### » **Constitutional Court of Colombia and widespread use of tutelas**

The Colombian Constitutional Court (CCC) has proven to be a steadfast champion of constitutional rights and of provisions in the peace agreement. The CCC has defended and expanded rights through its rulings. Its significance is tied to Afro-descendant, Indigenous peoples' and peasants' reliance on the 'tutela' — a writ of protection of constitutional and legal rights.

##### » **Indigenous-led news media development**

Indigenous media is very active, particularly radio broadcasting. Increasing the reach of Indigenous media to the wider society and to major news outlets will increase the representation of Indigenous cultures and their perspectives in Colombia.

##### » **Colombia's national and subnational elections processes**

The Colombian electoral system is creating connections and alignment between certain political parties and political movements. This alignment within the electoral system demonstrates that the most marginalized and excluded groups are successfully mobilizing for change and achieving greater political participation in some areas.

## ○ PATHWAYS TO PLURALISM: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Monitor's recommendations provide Colombia with several pathways to pluralism. These recommendations echo what experts, activists and stakeholders have long called for in Colombia.

By addressing the shortcomings outlined in these recommendations, Colombia will be better equipped to improve livelihoods, increase a sense of belonging and provide a life of dignity for all of Colombia's diverse communities. Their implementation aligns with the new administration's commitments to Colombians to *Vivir sabroso*.

### » **Ratify international laws and rights**

Ratify international treaties and recognize the authority of international bodies overseeing their monitoring and enforcement.

### » **Extend Colombian law and rights**

Extend constitutional and legal protections for Indigenous groups to Afro-descendants. Create protections for the self-determination and diversity of the Roma peoples and the peasantry. For this, the establishment and respect of autonomous communal authorities is essential.

### » **Implement and deliver for all**

Protect and respect minority rights through the implementation and enforcement of constitutional mandates and provisions, and relevant policies and laws. Strengthen the financial, technical and human resource capacities of state institutions to ensure implementation. Uncover the reasons for the lack of enforcement and implementation through monitoring.

### » **Secure civic space and peaceful civic mobilization**

Security and protection are urgent. Review existing security measures for social leaders and organizations to identify why they are failing and what new mechanisms are required. Adjust existing security mechanisms to reflect changing regional, ethnic and gender demographics.

Civil society efforts remain crucial in monitoring and denouncing rights violations. The international community must support civil society and help to increase the visibility of its work.

### » **Bridge data gaps**

Strengthen state capacities to produce complete, systematic and disaggregated data on the implementation of international and constitutional obligations. Disaggregated data should be gathered continuously over time and must account for ethnicity, race, class, rural belonging, gender and sexual orientation, age and disabilities of individuals.

Civil society, with the support of international institutions like the Global Centre for Pluralism, should strive to monitor and demand the production of such data, as well as produce independent data to contrast state data.

### » **Shed light on basic freedoms**


Significantly improve information about rights violations and impunity. Extraordinarily little information exists about discrimination and access to justice for minority or oppressed groups. State efforts should focus on gathering the available information across institutions and producing complete and systematic data on minority or oppressed groups. Civil society and international institutions, such as the Global Centre for Pluralism, play an important role in demanding the production of such data.

## ○ NEXT STEPS

The Global Centre for Pluralism developed the Global Pluralism Monitor to better understand the movement towards, and away from, pluralism in a society.

The report represents a first phase of work to be followed by an equally important engagement phase based on Monitor findings and recommendations. Both phases are driven by people deeply connected to the society; namely, nationals or those with a strong connection to

the country and extensive lived experience. The Global Centre for Pluralism is working with in-country partners to share the findings of the report and gather feedback. These activities will strengthen the efforts of local actors committed to building a more equitable, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Colombia.

 **For more information, please contact:**  
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