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Women take part in a candlelight vigil in Cali, Colombia, Aug. 24, 2025, in honor of victims of a cargo vehicle bomb attack near a Colombian Aerospace Force base, attributed to FARC dissident groups, that caused multiple casualties. At least 18 people have been killed and dozens wounded in two separate attacks in Colombia, deepening the country's most serious security crisis in decades. (OSV News photo/Reuters/Jair F. Coll)

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Bogotá, Colombia — August 26, 2025

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Colombia's bishops expressed their outrage after at least 18 people died and more than 40 were injured after two attacks in Colombia attributed to different dissident factions of the former FARC guerrilla group.

Bishops decried as "brutal" the "wave of violence that rocked the country," with the Archdiocese of Cali, Colombia's most populous city where the attacks happened, "urgently" calling for justice and peace.

Six people died when a cargo vehicle with explosives detonated near a Colombian Aerospace Force base, causing 71 further injuries, according to the mayor's office, as reported by Reuters.

Hours earlier, the agency reported, a National Police Black Hawk UH-60 helicopter participating in a coca leaf crop eradication operation was shot down in the municipality of Amalfi, in the department of Antioquia, leaving 12 officers dead.

The Colombian bishops' conference, in an Aug. 22 statement signed by its leaders, including the conference president, Archbishop Francisco Javier Múnera Correa of Cartagena, condemned the terrorist attacks and extended its "sentiments of solidarity" to the families of the victims "at this time when violence continues to knock on the doors of Colombian homes, sowing pain and despair."

The bishops made a direct appeal to all parties involved in the conflict to abandon "the path of death and walk the path of respect for life, which dignifies and makes true human development possible."

Colombian President Gustavo Petro attributed the attacks to dissident groups of the former FARC guerrilla movement, which refused to accept the 2016 peace accord aimed at ending the decades-long conflict that has claimed over 450,000 lives.

The country's bishops called on state authorities to intensify security and comprehensive care for the civilian population, placing the protection of citizens as an unavoidable priority.

Archbishop Luis Fernando Rodríguez Velásquez of Cali said in his Aug. 21 statement that the country "once again feels the thunderous sound of bomb explosions that

take human lives."

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In his message, he expressed a shared grief of the country experienced by decades of terrorist violence: "We are pained by the loss of human lives. … We are pained by the feeling of uncertainty and fear. … We are pained by the social and ethical breakdown."

The archbishop emphasized that this is the fourth terrorist attack in Cali in 2025, a situation that is compounded by the scourge of kidnapping in the Valle del Cauca.

Kidnappings of priests and religious are also not uncommon in Colombia.

Rodríguez was forceful in his demand for justice: "Impunity cannot become a common occurrence. We demand that justice be vigorously pursued so that those who plan, decide, and carry out these criminal acts are brought to justice."

A candlelit vigil was held in Cali Aug. 24 in honor of victims of a cargo vehicle bomb attack near the aerospace base.

Pope Leo XIV called for a worldwide day of fasting and prayer on Aug. 22 "asking the Lord to grant us peace and justice and to dry the tears of those who suffer because of the armed conflicts underway."

In keeping with the request, the archbishop of Cali celebrated a noon Mass for peace at the Metropolitan Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle on Aug. 22. He also urged people to "implore the peace of the Risen Lord" in all the parishes of his archdiocese.

In their statement, the bishops' conference asked Colombian faithful to entrust to "the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace," the "difficult moment we are going through as a nation," and "the joint search for solutions that will make it possible to rekindle hope through the paths of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace."