



PUENTE ARANDA MURAL

Bogotá, Colombia

38.0318, 78.4805



The mural before and after being painted over. Image courtesy of Gloher Cruz

Executive Summary

The project 'Open Museum of Bogotá: painting in the public space' was organised by the District Institute of Arts (IDARTES) and Urban Development Institute (IDU), with the support of the Mayor of Bogotá, Claudia López. Part of the initiative aimed to decorate eleven bridges across Bogotá, using local artists selected by a public call. One of these murals, painted by Saint Cat Crew on a supporting column of the Aranda bridge at the crossroad of Avenue of Americas with Street 50 near the Military Club, provoked diverse reactions and criticism. Representing the cycle of violence on the streets, the mural depicted a policeman being awarded a medal over human skulls. Shortly after it was finished, Luis Mauricio Mayorga painted over the mural, which sparked debate regarding freedom of expression, censorship and misuse of public funds. This case examines the controversies surrounding artistic intervention in legacies of violence.

Introduction

Colombia's violent history, defined by the infamous Medellín Cartel and decades of internal armed conflict between the state and the *FARC* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), has left deep social and political divisions. Despite the 2016 Peace Agreement, the legacy of egregious violence persists, and can be seen through high insecurity, crime rates and police brutality throughout the country. Such legacies are often addressed through urban art, which, in turn, has been met with backlash and heated debates over freedom of expression and censorship.

In December 2021, graffiti collective *Saint Cat Crew* painted a mural underneath *Puente Aranda* as part of the Open Museum of Bogotá project (MAB), supported by Mayor Claudia López, the District Institute of Arts (IDARTES) and the Urban Development Institute (IDU). The project aimed to reclaim and transform public space while supporting local artists following the pandemic. By narrating a sequence of events including a police official being awarded a medal over a collection of human skulls, the mural depicted the cycle of violence on the streets, in particular, police brutality¹. Hours after its unveiling, Luis Mayorga, a lawyer and former candidate for the Bogotá Council, painted over it with white paint. Supported by others such as Police Commissioner Armando Vergara, Mayorga argued that the mural incited hate towards the police and constituted a provocation of violence.²

Mayorga's actions sparked heated debate surrounding freedom of expression, censorship and misuse of taxpayer funds. For some, the mural shed light on the experiences of homeless people in the area and the reality of police violence, while for others it represented an unacceptable humiliation of public forces³. Eventually, the mural was painted over with a different design, with no substantive remedy to the underlying divisions.

Background

History of Violence and Division

To understand the negative portrayals of state forces in the 2021 mural by *Saint Cat Crew*, it is necessary to first understand Colombia's tumultuous history of state and non-state violence. To do so, it is helpful to identify three key periods: *La Violencia* (1948-1958), the internal armed conflict (1960s - 2016⁴) and post-conflict Colombia (2016 - present).

La Violencia was a period of brutal civil conflict between the Conservatives and the Liberals, ended by the formation of the National Front, which agreed to the alternation of both parties and facilitated power-sharing.⁵ However, the radical factions of the Liberal party were dissatisfied as

¹ Camilo Castillo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021.

² *Ibid.*

³ Infobae "Polémica por mural sobre abusos de la policía en puente de Bogotá". *infobae*. December 19, 2021.

⁴ In 2016 Colombia signed the Peace Agreement under President Juan Manuel Santos. However, violence continues to varying degrees across the country.

⁵ Teo Ballvé, 'TURF WARS IN COLOMBIA'S RED CORNER' In *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia* (Cornell University Press: 2020), 36.

violent persecution of left-wing Liberals continued, laying the foundations for the emergence of 'communist-inspired guerrilla groups'.⁶ The subsequent decades of internal conflict involved various actors, including left-wing guerrilla armies *FARC* and the *ELN*,⁷ against the Colombian military, 'government-proxy forces,' the paramilitaries,⁸ and was further complicated by powerful drug cartels. The impact of the conflict was devastating. Around 8.1 million people were displaced,⁹ over 200,000 were killed¹⁰ and there are currently more than 9 million victims.¹¹

The False Positives scandal under President Álvaro Uribe is essential to understanding critical portrayals of public forces in urban art. Partly due to a lack of training,¹² state forces murdered thousands of civilians and presented them as guerrillas killed in combat to meet targets, in exchange for financial reward.¹³ When the scandal came to light in 2008, following the murder and disappearance of young, working-class men from *Soacha*, relations with public forces and ordinary citizens were shaken. This came amid the response to Uribe's Justice and Peace Law (2005) to demobilise the paramilitary, which punished serious crimes including massacres, torture and murder with maximum sentences of eight years.¹⁴ For many Colombians, this was insufficient and set the tone of impunity and injustice, fuelling anger. On the other hand, many Colombian families were sympathetic towards the public forces that broke down the guerrilla and non-state forces that had plagued their lives with kidnappings and violent attacks.¹⁵ As a result, the presidency of Uribe polarised the country even further.¹⁶

Peace Deal and Post-Conflict

President Juan Manuel Santos' 2016 Peace Deal marked a turning point, but violence persists, and insecurity is high in Bogotá, where street crime rates are reported as rising in the last five years.¹⁷ In the rural areas, fighting continues, the *ELN* is still active¹⁸ and Colombia remains the deadliest country in the world for human rights activists.¹⁹ Additionally, recent years have seen extreme police brutality, which has cost many people their lives, such as 17-year-old student Dilan Cruz in 2019.²⁰ In 2020, the death of Javier Ordoñez at the hands of police sparked protests that led to

⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁷ *Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, or National Liberation Army in English.

⁸ Teo Ballvé, 'THE PARAMILITARY WAR OF POSITION' In *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia* (Cornell University Press: 2020), 64.

⁹ Human Rights Watch "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Colombia". Human Rights Watch. 2020.

¹⁰ Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, "El Conflicto Armado en Cifras". Observatorio de Memoria y Conflicto. 2022.

¹¹ Registro Único de Víctimas, "Registro único de Víctimas (RUV) Unidad para las Víctimas". 2023.

¹² Harvey Kline, "*Fighting Monsters in the Abyss: The Second Administration of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, 2006-2010*". (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 74.

¹³ L Haugaard, "Human Rights Abuses in Colombia from Uribe to Santos," In B.M. Bagley and J.D. Rosen (eds) *Colombia's Political Economy at the Outset of the Twenty-First Century: From Uribe to Santos and Beyond*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015, 263-266.

¹⁴ Teo Ballvé, 'TURF WARS IN COLOMBIA'S RED CORNER' In *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia* (Cornell University Press: 2020), 55.

¹⁵ Harvey Kline, "*Fighting Monsters in the Abyss: The Second Administration of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, 2006-2010*". (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 73.

¹⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁷ Numbeo, "Crime in Bogotá, Colombia, Safety in Bogotá." Numbeo. 2024

¹⁸ La Comisión de la Verdad, "Hallazgos y recomendaciones". Informe Final Comisión de la Verdad. June, 2022.

¹⁹ Alexander Iñigo, "Almost half of human rights defenders killed last year were in Colombia." *Guardian*. April 4, 2023.

²⁰ Dilan Cruz was killed in 2019 while protesting for greater access to education. There have been no arrests.

the deaths of nine civilians and 137 reports of police brutality.²¹ The government claimed the *FARC* and the *ELN* were behind the protests, demonstrating how the legacy of the conflict informs current divides²².

Moreover, during the National Strike in 2021, there were 39 murders allegedly by police, 548 missing persons and 963 illegal detentions between the 28th of April and the 7th of May, according to NGO *Indepaz*.²³ As such, police violence has become part of many citizens' realities. These incidents influenced the MAB project's goal to reflect citizens' realities through urban art.

Bogotá's graffiti scene has itself been shaped by police violence. The 2011 police murder of 16-year-old artist Diego Becerra and attempted cover-up was a turning point for the city. This tragedy led to genuine change as Bogotá is now 'one of the most street-art-friendly cities on Earth' as the rights of artists are more respected by police.²⁴

Understanding this historical context helps us understand why artistic intervention elicits such heated debates in Colombia, as insufficient punishment for decades of egregious violence has led to a lack of faith in traditional justice-seeking methods. In turn, art has been used as a form of testimony, education and resistance. Depending on the past experiences of the viewer, the meaning of the mural varies. For someone with experience of state violence, the skulls might symbolise the false positives, or the victims of police violence during the National Strike. Alternatively, for someone whose family was terrorised by the guerrilla, the intention behind the mural can symbolise the same radical ideology that made many Colombians' lives hell during the conflict.

History of the Contestation

*Art or provocation of violence?*²⁵

On December 18 2021, during a public event, Saint Cat Crew presented their local government-funded mural inspired by the reality of local residents and homeless people, which was followed by a wave of criticism claiming it encouraged violence against the police. Hours after it was completed, Luis Mayorga painted over the mural, claiming he was 'acting against vandalism and hate'.²⁶ His actions ignited a heated debate on social media that was covered by local news channels. Some aligned themselves with Mayorga, while others considered his actions to be a form of censorship and silencing of marginalised voices.

²¹ Kejal Vyas, "Protests Over Bogotá Police Killing Leave Nine Dead; Authorities Call for Probe, Urge Calm After Video of Officers Fatally Firing Stun Gun at Restrained Cabdriver Sparked Violent Unrest in Colombian Capital". New York, N.Y: Dow Jones & Company Inc, 2020.

²² Gideon Long, "Bogotá Counts Cost of Fatal Police Brutality Protests." *FT.Com*. Sep 13, 2020.

²³ *Indepaz*, "Comunicado Conjunto Temblores ONG Observatorio de Derechos Humanos y Conflictividades de *Indepaz*" INDEPAZ. May 9, 2021.

²⁴ Nicholas Gill, "The Ultimate Street Art Guide to Bogotá". *New York Magazine*. 2019.

²⁵ *El Tiempo*, 2021.

²⁶ Katy Sanchez, RCN 2021, Translated by author.

Police Commissioner, Armando Vergara, echoed Mayorga by calling the mural an insult to the institution and a provocation of violence.²⁷ Through a post on X, on December 20, 2021, Juan Carlos Wills Ospina, member of Colombia's house of representatives, summoned Claudia López to a debate regarding her control of taxpayer money and demanded that she explain her decision to put it towards the humiliation of the national police.²⁸ However, there is no evidence that this debate took place, nor was there an official comment from Ms López.

In response to the criticism, Catalina Valencia, Director of *IDARTES*, explained how the mural had been created as a 'community conversation' with marginalised populations to showcase their realities.²⁹ For example, prior to MAB, *Saint Cat Crew* had worked with homeless populations for five years, collecting lived experiences as the subject of their art.³⁰ The content of their mural is further supported by a report showing 20% of physical aggression against homeless individuals comes from security forces.³¹ A member of *Saint Cat Crew* explained that the mural was not intended to be an attack on the police, but rather a statement against political violence throughout the country.³² The exchanges on social media demonstrate the complexity of artistic intervention in public space, but they also demonstrate the 'total disconnect' between those in government and the reality of the *barrio*³³, as mentioned by Carlos Bacca of *Saint Cat Crew*.³⁴

It must be noted that the mural appeared amid a wider questioning of the Colombian police force, following the murders of Javier Ordóñez and Dilan Cruz and the violent repression of the National Strike.³⁵ These events re-ignited debates over police reform and whether the force should continue to belong to the Defence Ministry, as opposed to the Interior.³⁶ However, owing to the divisions explored above, some Colombians were deeply offended by the portrayal of the uniformed official in the mural, claiming it was a dangerous humiliation and mistreatment that encouraged violence against police.

Aside from highlighting the lack of understanding across social groups, there was little ramification as the contention happened over the course of a few days, after which the mural was repainted with a new design. Local artists in Bogotá explained that relations between police and artists remain problematic, although they emphasised the support of the city itself in reference to projects like MAB. A young male artist from the south of the city explained that police violence and responsive artistic portrayal of it have become a cycle that would be near impossible to break without collective action from both sides.³⁷ Until there is a meaningful reform of the police, particularly ESMAD³⁸, there will

²⁷ Camilo Castillo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021. Translated by author.

²⁸ Camilo Castillo, "Citarán a Claudia López a debate de control Político por mural", *El Tiempo*. December 12, 2021.

²⁹ Caracol Radio, "Idartes: 'El arte no se censura', Tras Polémico mural en puente en Bogotá", *Caracol Radio*. December 20, 2021.

³⁰ Camilo Castillo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021.

³¹ Infobae, "Polémica por mural sobre abusos de la policía en puente de Bogotá". *infobae*. December 19, 2021.

³² Camilo Castillo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021. Translated by author.

³³ Spanish for neighbourhood, tends to refer to low-income areas.

³⁴ Carlos Bacca in *El Espectador*, "El Graffiti censurado en Puente Aranda, más allá de una polémica viral: Integrantes del Colectivo Saint Cat Crew" Facebook video. December 29, 2021..

³⁵ Infobae, "Polémica por mural sobre abusos de la policía en puente de Bogotá". *infobae*. December 19, 2021.

³⁶ Gideon Long, "Bogotá Counts Cost of Fatal Police Brutality Protests." *FT.Com*. Sep 13, 2020.

³⁷ Interviews carried out by the author with graffiti artists from Bogotá.

³⁸ *Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios* (Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron) is Colombia's riot police.

not be a decline in brutality. Another artist explained that on various occasions in the city, graffiti and muralism have become a direct form of dialogue with the streets.³⁹ In turn, urban artists will not stop portraying injustices until they stop occurring, regardless of their political affiliation.

Decision-Making Processes

The decision to carry out the MAB project originated in Bogotá's Mayor's Office, under Claudia Lopez, with the support of the District Institute of Arts and the Institute for Urban Development. It sought to destigmatise street art and foster discussions on art, public space and democracy. Local artists applied for government grants dependent on the involvement of local communities as the centre of their creative process. According to *IDARTES*, over 3,000 residents were involved in the process, and over 26 billion Colombian pesos have been invested in the transformation of the city.⁴⁰ The Secretariat of Security, Coexistence and Justice notes a 41% decrease in reports of theft, homicides and sexual crimes in under-bridge zones in 2022.⁴¹ Despite the controversy surrounding the *Puente Aranda* mural, the project has been largely successful.

Opposition to the mural came predominantly from government-affiliated figures, such as Juan Carlos Wills Ospina, Luis Mayorga and the police commissioner. Catalina Valencia, the director of *IDARTES*, argued that the mural and *Saint Cat Crew* were protected by law, citing Article 71 of the Colombian Constitution, which states that 'the pursuit of knowledge and artistic expression are free', along with Article 1.4 of the General Law of Culture, which states that 'in no case shall the state exercise censorship over the form and ideological and artistic content of cultural projects and productions'.⁴² A ruling from 1995 supports Valencia's comments, as it ruled that artistic freedom has two pillars: the right to create and the right to disseminate, affirming artists' rights to share work without state censorship.⁴³ However, Mayorga argued his actions were not censorship, but an exercise of freedom of expression. Lawyer Santiago Pardo Rodríguez countered this, stating that erasure of art goes beyond freedom of expression and becomes censorship.⁴⁴

Rather than addressing claims of police violence and ways to improve police-community relations, the debate shifted to the right of freedom of expression and distribution of taxpayer money, overshadowing the MAB's intention to highlight grassroots perspectives. Critics of the mural overlooked the fact that public funds also finance the militarised police force. Despite intense concerns that the mural provoked violence, there was no consideration of the fatal violence at the hands of police during 2021. In this respect, greater dialogue between the two sides could help them understand each other's complaints and how these issues are rooted in divisions created by years of political violence on both sides.

³⁹ Interviews carried out by the author with graffiti artists from Bogotá.

⁴⁰ *IDARTES* "What is Bogotá's Open Museum?" MAB, *Idartes en casa*. 2024.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Infobae*, "Polémica por mural sobre abusos de la policía en puente de Bogotá". *infobae*. December 19, 2021.

⁴³ Camilo Castillo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

In response to Mayorga's actions, Valencia encouraged him to engage in open dialogue and share his perspective on what should replace it, promoting discussion as a remedy to division.⁴⁵ However, there is no evidence of whether Mayorga accepted this invitation. Eventually, *Saint Cat Crew* responded by returning to the site and repainting the site, this time depicting a child with the words 'popular resistance'.⁴⁶

Summary and Conclusions

The controversy surrounding the *Puente Aranda* mural elucidates the enduring legacy of Colombia's violent past and the deep, historic divisions that continue to shape its current society. The MAB project reveals both the potential of urban art to encourage collective conversations and the complexity of navigating deeply entrenched socio-political divides in public space. In terms of impact, the dispute has highlighted the need for inclusive dialogue to foster understanding and tolerance in countries coming to grips with violent, sectarian histories. While the mural had aimed to spotlight police violence and the experiences of the *Puente Aranda* homeless population, the backlash that followed and the rapid erasure of the mural demonstrated how highly polarised narratives can lead to efforts to confront systemic issues being overlooked.

Although local artists have claimed there is still tension between their community and police, there have been encouraging developments regarding other disputed murals closely linked to this case. Also in Bogotá, a mural linking several members of the military, by name, to the False Positives asking 'Who gave the order?', caused a legal dispute that lasted over a year.⁴⁷ The original mural appeared in 2019 and was taken down by the army. However, it reappeared twice more in 2020 and 2021 and went viral on social media, leading one of the members named in the mural, Marcos Pinto, to file a *tutela* (legal action) claiming it damaged his reputation.⁴⁸ In August 2021, just three months before the *Puente Aranda* scandal, the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the mural, stating it is a protected form of expression based on reliable sources from the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP).⁴⁹

Comparatively, while both cases address state violence, by directly naming individuals, the 'Who gave the order?' mural provoked legal action, forcing further inspection, which the *Puente Aranda* mural did not. However, the supportive verdict is encouraging as it indicates that when the justice system does get involved in assessing artistic intervention in social issues, the transformative potential of public art is recognised.

To build on these gains, future initiatives must strive for greater inclusivity in planning and execution. Ensuring diverse groups are included and engaging citizens like Mayorga in the earlier

⁴⁵ Caracol Radio, "Idartes: 'El arte no se censura', Tras Polémico mural en puente en Bogotá", Caracol Radio. December 20, 2021.

⁴⁶ El Espectador, "El Grafiti censurado en Puente Aranda, más allá de una polémica viral: Integrantes del Colectivo Saint Cat Crew" Facebook video. December 29, 2021.

⁴⁷ Civic Space, "Movice murals case, Civic Case Tracker" RFK Human Rights. 2023.

⁴⁸ A legal mechanism in Colombian law that allows individuals to file a claim for the protection of their fundamental constitutional rights when they are being violated or threatened.

⁴⁹ Civic Space, "Movice murals case, Civic Case Tracker" RFK Human Rights. 2023.

stages of creative initiatives like MAB would promote crucial dialogue between opposing social groups and mitigate conflict, leading to more empathetic understandings of contrasting perspectives. In a country as divided as Colombia with the scars of political violence on all sides, the collective dialogue that muralism encourages is essential to promoting reconciliation. By protecting artistic expression and embracing its potential, Colombia (and the rest of the world) can take meaningful steps towards building a more inclusive future.

Research contributed by Isabella Crouch

Last updated December 2024

References

- Ballvé, Teo. "TURF WARS IN COLOMBIA'S RED CORNER." In *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia*, 35–58. Cornell University Press, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvpwhghq.8>.
- Ballvé, Teo. "THE PARAMILITARY WAR OF POSITION" In *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia*, 59–82. Cornell University Press, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvpwhghq.9>
- Castillo, Camilo, "Citarán a Claudia López a debate de control Político por mural", *El Tiempo*. December 12, 2021. Available at: <https://www.eltiempo.com/bogota/claudia-lopez-sera-citada-a-debate-de-control-politico-por-grafiti-640296> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Castillo, Camilo, "Murales en los Puentes, ¿Arte o provocación?". *El Tiempo*. December 19, 2021. Available at: <https://www.eltiempo.com/bogota/que-hay-detras-de-la-polemica-por-el-mural-en-contra-de-la-policia-640087> (Accessed: 18 December 2024).
- Caracol Radio, "Idartes: 'El arte no se censura', Tras Polémico mural en puente en Bogotá", *Caracol Radio*. December 20, 2021. Available at: https://caracol.com.co/programa/2021/12/20/6am_hoy_por_hoy/1640007268_974910.html (Accessed: 18 December 2024).
- Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, "El Conflicto Armado en Cifras". *Observatorio de Memoria y Conflicto*. 2022. Available at: <https://micrositios.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/observatorio/> (Accessed: December 19 2024).
- Civic Space "Movice murals case, Civic Case Tracker" *RFK Human Rights*. 2023. Available at: <https://civicspace-casetracker.rfkhumanrights.org/cases/movice-murals-case/> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Cruz, Mariana. "Puente de la Calle 170 se llena de color gracias al 'Museo Abierto de Bogotá'" *Bogota.gov.co*. November 14, 2021. Available at: <https://bogota.gov.co/mi-ciudad/cultura-recreacion-y-deporte/museo-abierto-de-bogota-transforma-el-puente-de-la-calle-170> (Accessed: 18 December 2024).

- El Espectador, “*El Grafiti censurado en Puente Aranda, más allá de una polémica viral: Integrantes del Colectivo Saint Cat Crew*” Facebook video. December 29, 2021. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=990967548436289> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Gill, Nicholas. “*The Ultimate Street Art Guide to Bogotá*”. *New York Magazine*. 2019. Available at: <https://nymag.com/urbanist/the-ultimate-street-art-guide-to-bogot.html> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Haugaard, L. “Human Rights Abuses in Colombia from Uribe to Santos,” In B.M. Bagley and J.D. Rosen (eds) *Colombia's Political Economy at the Outset of the Twenty-First Century: From Uribe to Santos and Beyond*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. 263–275.
- Human Rights Watch, “*El rol de los altos mandos en falsos positivos Evidencias de responsabilidad de generales y coroneles del Ejército colombiano por ejecuciones de civiles*” Human Rights Watch. 2015. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/colombia0615sp_4up.pdf (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Human Rights Watch, “*World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Colombia*”. *Human Rights Watch*. 2020. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/colombia> (Accessed: December 19 2024).
- IDARTES. “*What is Bogotá's Open Museum?*” MAB, *Idartes en casa*. 2024. Available at: <https://idartesencasa.gov.co/en/artes-plasticas-y-visuales/museo-abierto-de-bogota/2023/que-es> (Accessed: 20 December 2024).
- Indepaz “*Comunicado Conjunto Temlores ONG Observatorio de Derechos Humanos y Conflictividades de Indepaz*”. INDEPAZ - Instituto de Estudios para el Eesarrollo y la Paz. May 9, 2021. Available at: <https://indepaz.org.co/cifras-de-violencia-policial-en-el-paro-nacional/> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Infobae “*Polémica por mural sobre abusos de la policía en puente de Bogotá*”. *infobae*. December 19, 2021. Available at: <https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2021/12/19/polemica-por-mural-sobre-abusos-de-la-policia-en-puente-de-bogota/> (Accessed: 18 December 2024).
- lñigo, Alexander. “*Almost half of human rights defenders killed last year were in Colombia*.” *Guardian*. April 4, 2023. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/04/colombia-human-rights-defenders-killings-2022> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Kline, Harvey F. *Fighting Monsters in the Abyss: The Second Administration of Colombian President Álvaro Uribe Vélez, 2006-2010*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015. Accessed December 18, 2024. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- La Comisión de la Verdad, “*Hallazgos y recomendaciones*”. *Informe Final Comisión de*

- la Verdad*. June, 2022. Available at:
<https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/hallazgos-y-recomendaciones> (Accessed: December 19 2024).
- Long, Gideon. "Bogotá Counts Cost of Fatal Police Brutality Protests." *FT.Com*. Sep 13, 2020.
<https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/bogotá-counts-cost-fatal-police-brutality/docview/2467904750/se-2>
- Numbeo, "Crime in Bogotá, Colombia, Safety in Bogotá." Numbeo. 2024. Available at:
<https://www.numbeo.com/crime/in/Bogota> (Accessed: 19 December 2024).
- Registro Único de Víctimas, "Registro único de Víctimas (RUV) Unidad para las Víctimas". 2023. Available at:
<https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/registro-unico-de-victimas-ruv/37394> (Accessed: December 19 2024).
- Vyas, Kejal. "Protests Over Bogotá Police Killing Leave Nine Dead; Authorities Call for Probe, Urge Calm After Video of Officers Fatally Firing Stun Gun at Restrained Cabdriver Sparked Violent Unrest in Colombian Capital". New York, N.Y: Dow Jones & Company Inc, 2020.
<https://www.proquest.com/blogs-podcasts-websites/protests-over-bogotá-police-killing-leave-nine/docview/2441331190/se-2>

Figures

- Mural photo from Gloher Cruz on X, with permission:
<https://x.com/GloherCruz/status/1472736960456372226>. (Cover Image)

About Contested Histories

In recent years, there have been many contestations over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

The Contested Histories project is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon, and, although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at EuroClio - European Association for History Educators in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

Contact information

Paula O'Donohoe
Program Director
contestedhistories@euroclio.eu
www.contestedhistories.org

EuroClio Secretariat
Riouwstraat 139
2585HP The Hague The
Netherlands
secretariat@euroclio.eu
www.euroclio.eu

Published by IHJR-EuroClio in December 2024
This document is copyright © The Contested Histories Initiative 2024

Some rights reserved [CC BY 4.0](#)

To cite this publication:
The Contested Histories Initiative, "Colombia: Puente Aranda Mural, Bogota", *Contested Histories Case Study #435* (May 2026), retrieved from [link]

The Contested Histories Initiative receives support from the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.