

# Violence against civilians in the Colombian conflict<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We base our analysis on a database which we built with the significant contribution of Juan Fernando Vargas. This paper was prepared for the workshop “Techniques of Violence in Civil Wars” organised by the Centre for the Study of Civil Wars at PRIO, Oslo. Restrepo acknowledges financial support from Banco de la República. We also want to express our gratitude to Cristina Restrepo for superb research assistance. Responsibility for any errors remains our own.

## 1. Introduction

The Colombian conflict is a complicated and devastating affair. Government forces face two left-wing guerrilla groups called the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).<sup>2</sup> Illegal right-wing paramilitaries tied together under the umbrella known as the United Self-defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) also combat the guerrillas.<sup>3</sup> Guerrilla and AUC coffers have swollen in recent years from diverse income sources that include drugs, kidnapping and extortion, taking the conflict to new intensity levels. The conflict has been a plague for Colombia. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, injured or kidnapped and hundreds of thousands have been displaced. There has been massive property damage and large-scale theft of property, notably land. A deeper understanding of this long-running conflict will clearly be welcome in Colombia.

The outside world also must take a close look at the Colombian conflict for a variety of reasons. First, it spills over Colombia's borders particularly through the narcotics business and the flow of refugees. Second, the outside world exerts strong influences on the Colombian violence in Colombia and cannot in good conscience ignore these effects that work primarily through two channels. First, the culture of illegal drug consumption in the West keeps Colombia's non-state armed groups well supplied with cash. Second, the military and economic assistance programs of the US and, to a lesser extent, Europe are important for Colombia.

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<sup>2</sup> There are at least four more small guerrilla groups, some of them splinter factions of former demobilised groups.

<sup>3</sup> We will systematically use the terminology "illegal paramilitaries" or, for short, "paramilitaries" rather than AUC since the latter is a rather loose, and not entirely comprehensive, collection of groups.

A third, and underappreciated, reason to study Colombia is that it is a particularly revealing case study for conflict researchers. For a country embroiled in a serious conflict, Colombia is quite rich. The country, therefore, has managed to develop a rather good information base, including much statistical data, on the conflict. Moreover, Colombia has a vibrant intellectual and academic environment out of which have emerged many interesting insights into and analyses of the conflict. There is even a special academic field in the country known as violentology, an unfortunate but highly useful consequence of Colombia's long history of conflict. Thus, Colombia offers a unique, and possibly unparalleled, opportunity for conflict researchers to develop their field.

One result of the fertile environment for conflict research in Colombia has been the development of our own database described in Restrepo et al. (2004a) and in section 2 below. Restrepo et al. (2004a) presents the basic contours of the data including the pattern over time of the number of attacks, clashes, and casualties arranged by group, the victimisation profile and various other aspects of the conflict. It also divides the conflict since 1988 into three periods characterized by distinct levels and dynamics of conflict intensity. Restrepo and Spagat (2004a) extend the data through the end of 2003 and show that there was a dramatic structural break for the better in the conflict toward the end of 2002 associated with the new government of Alvaro Uribe. Restrepo et al. (2004b) compares the treatment of Colombia in large cross-country conflict datasets with our own information, finding a general tendency for the big datasets to underestimate the magnitude of the Colombian conflict and to mischaracterize its dynamics.

In the present paper we develop our research program in two main directions. First, we focus almost exclusively on violence to civilians. We do provide some information on violence against combatants, but always with the purpose of illuminating our central subject of violence against civilians. Second, we supply much more detailed information on specific techniques of violence than we have in past work. Previously, we have employed an aggregate category of “attacks” to cover all single-authored violent events implemented without effective resistance. However, in this paper we disaggregate attacks into twenty-one sub-categories, considerably enhancing the richness and depth of our analysis. We establish not only the numbers of civilians killed and injured annually in conflict events organized by the armed group(s) involved, but also the types of events in which these casualties, i.e., killings plus injuries, tend to occur.

Of course, the human impact of the conflict extends well beyond civilian killings and injuries. In this paper we will not address combatant casualties, forced internal displacement, kidnapping, property appropriation, rape, threats and other forms of violence. Instead, we concentrate on civilians and on lethal and near-lethal violence i.e., those forms with the deepest and most immediate human impact. This focus is consistent with the human security agenda that prioritizes violence against civilians as the highest ranking concern on the development agenda.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, in the past there has been less high-quality quantitative information on killings and injuries than there has been on other violent activity such as kidnapping and forced displacement.

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<sup>4</sup> See Security Dialogue (forthcoming) special section on Human Security.

Our main new results are as follows. Most civilian casualties occur not during clashes between armed groups but during attacks, i.e., one-sided events, overwhelmingly those perpetrated by non-state armed groups. The breakdown of attacks by type reveals that the guerrillas and the illegal paramilitaries possess fundamentally different natures. The paramilitaries do almost nothing other than kill civilians.<sup>5</sup> Their killing is very purposive as evidenced by the small number of civilians they injure. The guerrillas, on the other hand, kill and especially injure many civilians but most of their actions are essentially economic sabotage. They have, however, shifted their activity steadily over the years toward the use of explosives in an indiscriminate fashion. This development translates directly into a sharp increase in civilian injuries in guerrilla attacks. Another interesting finding is the rather large number of civilians killed in guerrilla check points and road blockages.

There has been some interesting recent literature on civil war and civilian deaths. Kalyvas (1999 & 2004) provide extensive discussion on the logic of violence against civilians in civil wars that utilize below. Kalyvas' main contribution is to dispel the widespread notion that most violence against civilians is simply senseless and irrational. To the contrary, armed groups often target their violence well with the aim of deterring civilians from supporting the opposing side in war. The effectiveness of this tactic requires relatively accurate targeting of people who really are supporting the other side rather than wanton killing of random individuals. We find these ideas, with some modification, are very useful for illuminating the different nature of the

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<sup>5</sup> The illegal paramilitary groups claim that the vast majority of their victims are guerrilla supporters and, consequently, legitimate targets. However, in our methodology most of these victims are defined as civilians since they do not actively participate in the hostilities, do not wear insignia or uniforms and are not armed

guerrillas and the illegal paramilitaries in the Colombian conflict. Since a prime guerrilla objective is to disrupt the economy they engage in much fairly random violence which well serves this purpose. The paramilitaries mainly endeavour to deter civilian support and, therefore, target their violence more closely on people they specifically intend to kill.

Azam and Hoeffler (2001) also view violence against civilians as a strategically calculated choice. They develop a model in which, under certain conditions, a government will terrorize civilians in areas where rebels enjoy civilian support with the objective of displacing these civilians to prepare the ground for an effective challenge to the rebels in these areas. The authors find some empirical support for their scenario in African data. Our data clearly shows that the Colombian government does not employ this tactic, however, it is quite plausible that the illegal paramilitaries do. We will not pursue this hypothesis below but we may do so in the future using forced displacement data.

Gobarath et al (2003 & 2004) employ WHO health data on a cross-section civil-war-afflicted countries and statistical methods. They argue that the indirect effects of war, working through disease and disability are very large and long-lasting and disproportionately affect women and children. We will, nevertheless, focus exclusively on the direct consequences of the Colombian conflict and not attempt to apply the observations of Gobarath et al (2003 & 2004) in this paper.

## 2. The Data

Our dataset contains the major events from the Colombian conflict, 1988-2003. Our main sources are the quarterly publications of the Colombian NGO CINEP on human rights and political violence in the country. The CINEP reports have two primary foundations. First, CINEP has an extensive network of local sources, including members of religious communities, government officials, union leaders and NGO members. CINEP researchers also digest virtually all printed media reports on political violence and human rights in Colombia.

We begin with CINEP's event list and proceed in several stages. First, we screen out violence we judge to be unrelated to the conflict. Many events in the CINEP reports involve pure criminal activity, including family violence, pursuit of personal vendettas or property crime. Some of these events may be linked to the conflict through some complex channels. But we endeavour to include only actions of clear and direct military significance affecting human security. We log all the qualifying events into our system.

Next, we perform extensive quality checks on the data. This mainly involves investigating in the press record all of the large events plus a big random sample of all of the events to ensure that CINEP has properly treated these events and that we have recorded them correctly in our database. We also search independently through a variety of sources, including newspapers and reports of other human rights organizations, for events that CINEP might have missed, occasionally adding events on this basis. Finally, we continuously improve the data as we analyze it, systematically searching for possible problems whenever we find curious or interesting new results. A

major focus of our current work is to systematically collect data from a wide variety of other sources, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Colombian government and even the FARC. This effort will enable further quality checking and augmentation of the database.

We believe the quality of the data is quite high. We have developed considerable confidence in the CINEP source through our quality control procedures. We are also quite certain that we have faithfully transferred the raw information into our database. Moreover, we have only added events or changed the rendering of events after extensive investigation so we are particularly sure of ourselves in these instances. Our data should be especially reliable on killings because killings receive much attention and dead bodies provide evidence. Nevertheless, the Colombian conflict, like any conflict, is a chaotic and complex affair. It is impossible to create a truly complete record of everything that happens in it. For example, threats are part of the conflict but they are amorphous and tricky to measure so we have simply left them out of the dataset. We also suspect that our data underestimates the prevalence of some types of events such as mine explosions and oil pipeline attacks, since these are often not reported in the media and can be missed by CINEP's field network. In the short run we hope that our data at least faithfully reflect the right trends over time for these variables. In the long run we plan to improve the database by supplementing it with data from other sources and rating the quality of these sources.

Some of the main characteristics of the current version of the database are as follows. It is very large, including more than 21,000 self-contained events. It is geographically referenced down to the level of more than 1,100

municipalities. It distinguishes between more than 40 types of events, ranging from clashes between armed groups to massacres, road blockages and even the explosion of bombs that spew propaganda pamphlets. It records killings and injuries of both civilians and combatants, classified by group membership, as well as takings of people by both non-state armed groups and the government. It contains information on the type of weapons used in violent events, including firearms, explosives and mines. Finally, there is a rather long and high- frequency time dimension with daily data covering sixteen years.

In this paper we focus on two dimensions of the dataset: time and type of event. We first divide events into two main categories: clashes and attacks. Clashes are fights between two armed groups.<sup>6</sup> Attacks are one-sided, i.e., they are events carried out by a single armed group without effective resistance. Table 1 summarizes the attack typology we employ below. We have designed these categories to provide maximum explanatory power for the purpose of this paper, specifically to study violence against civilians in the Colombian conflict. Some of the attack types can be further disaggregated but we judge that doing so would obscure rather than enhance the analysis.

Table 1 is largely self-explanatory but we wish to clarify a few points. The dataset contains nearly 1800 compound events, i.e., events composed of two or three closely connected actions. Compound events are an interesting object of study but we do not pursue them in this paper. Rather, for each compound event we determine which action we consider to be the primary one and classify the event into that category. In other words, we collapse compound events into their main single components. A particular

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<sup>6</sup> There are a tiny number of three-sided fights in the dataset which we will ignore.

consequence of this procedure is to treat attacks leading to clashes as simple clashes.

Type of action	Description
1 Aerial bombardment	Aerial attack from an airplane or helicopter.
2 Ambush	Surprise attack by concealed people lying in wait.
3 Anti-kidnapping operation	Attempted rescue of kidnapped people or hostages.
4 Armed Robbery	Stealing or looting by an armed group.
5 Artillery attack	Shooting of artillery or other heavy fire from armed personnel carriers.
6 Attack on means of transport	Damaging cars, buses, trucks, trains, etc..
7 Bombing	Detonation of an explosive device not covered in categories 1, 12, 16 and 17.
8 Check point and/or road blocking	Search of vehicles and questioning of occupants and/or blocking of public road.
9 Electoral interference	Disruption to electoral process such as an attack on a voting booth.
10 Generic attack	Information is insufficient to determine the precise type of attack.
11 Harassment to fixed position	Minor action against a fixed structure or place, such as a police station, military base or town, without attempting to take the position.
12 Incursion	Entry into a town or village.
13 Infrastructure attack	Actions against energy transmission networks, pipelines, roads, railroads, etc.
14 Local police station attack	Assault on a local police post (CAI in Spanish).
15 Mass kidnapping	Simultaneous kidnapping of more than 4 people.
16 Massacre	Killing of more than three defenceless people with some selectiveness against either the people killed or the place where they are killed.
17 Mine explosion	Explosion of a land mine.
18 Other government offensive operations	Normally actions asserting control over territory such as patrolling.
19 Propaganda explosion	Detonation of device that spreads propaganda pamphlets.
20 Raid	Judicially sanctioned searches.
21 Taking of town or village	Entry into a town or village leading to at least temporary control.

Table 1 Typology of attacks

Many actions, such as incursions or infrastructure attacks, include the use of explosives. Our category of “bombing” does not cover all of these explosions for two reasons. First, we have separated out certain types of

explosions such as mine explosions, specified in the table, that we consider sufficiently interesting to merit their own categories. Second, as discussed above, when bombings are a secondary feature of a larger event we do not classify the event as a bombing.

Finally, all attacks in the database have a single author which, in the overwhelming majority of cases is the government, the FARC, the ELN or the illegal paramilitaries. There are many claims of collusion government forces and the illegal paramilitaries. For example, such allegations feature centrally in the annual reports of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.<sup>7</sup>

The Colombian government concedes that such links do exist but that they are contrary to government policy which is to vigorously persecute them. The nature of government-paramilitary ties and the evolution over time of their strength and character is a very complex issue that we are currently pursuing through theoretical modelling (Mandler and Spagat, 2003) and the application of statistical methods to our dataset (Restrepo and Spagat, 2004b). But presently we lack sufficient reliable information on these ties to allow us to integrate them into the present analysis. We will, therefore, treat all attacks as pure single-authored events.

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<sup>7</sup> In its 2004 Annual Report, Amnesty International argues that there are "...reports pointing to the ongoing consolidation of paramilitary forces in heavily militarized areas and indicating strong collusion between paramilitaries and the security forces." (Amnesty International, 2004). Human Rights Watch has written extensively about "persistent ties" between illegal paramilitary and security forces, see, for example Human Rights Watch (2001) and Human Rights Watch (2002).

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. The Aggregate Level

Figure 1 gives the annual time series for total civilian killings and injuries.

The most dramatic feature of these figures is the sharp rise in killings and injuries beginning in 1998 and 1997 respectively followed by equally dramatic turnarounds starting in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

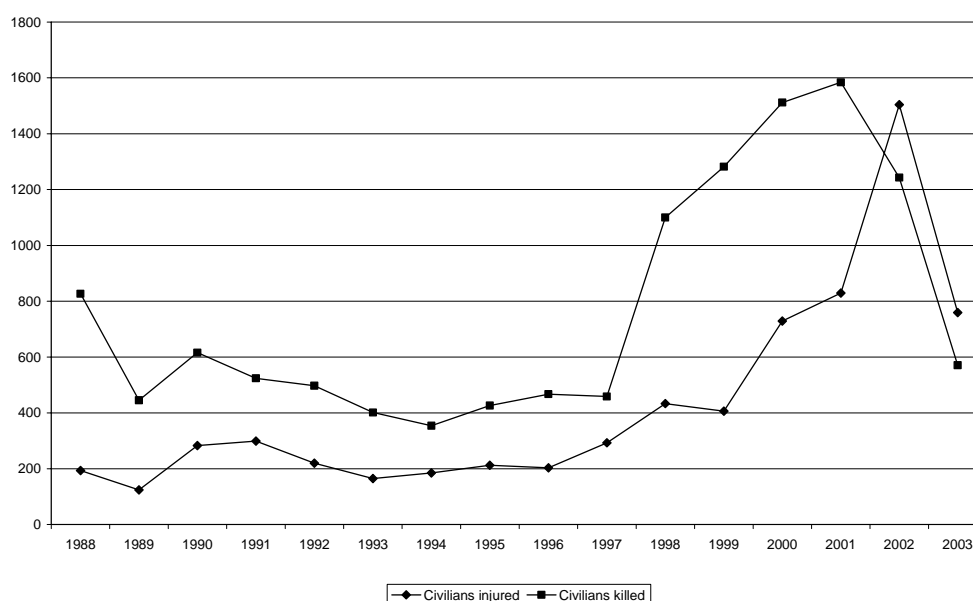


Figure 1 Total civilian killings and injuries

Table 2 gives the number of civilians killed in attacks and clashes respectively, organized by group, over the whole period 1988-2003. It shows that, while there are many civilian casualties (the sum of killings and injuries) due to clashes, more than 85% of all civilian casualties occur during attacks rather than during clashes. Therefore, we will focus primarily on attacks in this paper although we will return to clashes in section 3.3.

	During Clashes	During attacks	Total
Combatants	23,917	8,941	32,858
Civilians	2,504	16,618	19,122
Total	26,421	25,559	51,980

Table 2 Casualties 1988-2003

### 3.2. Attacks

#### 3.2.1. Counting the types of attacks

Table 3 shows the number of attacks of all kinds carried out by all groups and the percentages of each type in the total. The presence of infrastructure attacks at the top of the table immediately drives home the economic nature of the conflict. Several of the other most common events such as road blockages and attacks on means of transport are also wreak economic havoc and this is probably their primary motivation in most cases. Nevertheless, massacres, bomb attacks, ambushes and incursions, i.e., actions that often target civilians, are also near the top of the table.

Type of Attack	Total occurrences	Share
Check point and/or road blockage	2,207	14.4%
Infrastructure attack	2,204	14.4%
Generic attack	2,060	13.4%
Massacre	1,461	9.5%
Attack on means of transport	1,456	9.5%
Bombing	1,365	8.9%
Ambush	1,104	7.2%
Incursion	1,049	6.8%
Mass kidnapping	607	4.0%
Mine explosion	415	2.7%
Electoral interference	259	1.7%
Harassment to a fixed position	231	1.5%
Taking of town or village	167	1.1%
Local police station attack	164	1.1%
Aerial bombardment	155	1.0%
Armed robbery	144	0.9%
Other government offensive operations	88	0.6%
Raid	85	0.6%
Anti-kidnapping operation	79	0.5%
Propaganda explosion	17	0.1%
Artillery attack	5	0.0%
Grand total	15,322	100%

Table 3 Prevalence of attack types

Table 4 gives the number of attacks in all categories broken down both by group and by year, painting a sharp picture of the different nature of the three groups. The guerrilla appear first and foremost as disrupters of the Colombian economy, with road blockages, infrastructure attacks and attacks on means of transport accounting for nearly half of their actions over the years. Second, the guerrillas engage in many actions that challenge state control of small rural villages such as incursions, harassments to fixed positions and takings of towns or villages. These are often high-risk operations with small potential financial payoffs and, therefore, must be considered high-value actions by guerrilla leaders.

The guerrillas have inflicted many casualties as we discuss below.

Figure 2 shows time series for guerrilla check points and/or road blockages,

bomb attacks and mine explosions. The rise and fall of checkpoints and/or road blockages is striking. Bombings grow rapidly between from 1998 to 2002 before falling sharply, while mine attacks rise even more steeply 1999-2003 with one downtick. Infrastructure attacks show an interesting “M” shape that peaks in 1991 and 2001.

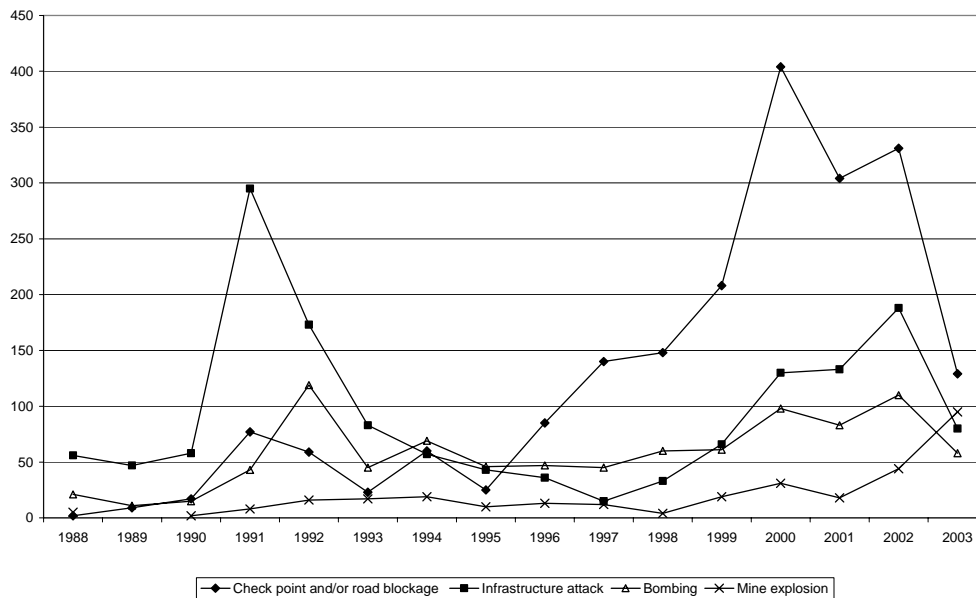


Figure 2 Main guerrilla Attack Types

The illegal paramilitaries engage overwhelming in violence against civilians, with massacres constituting more than 60% of all their actions. Paramilitaries perpetrate few attacks that could have much direct, negative economic impact. This makes sense since their original support base was largely wealthy landowners, cattle farmers and drug lords, people who benefit not just from the private security services the paramilitaries provide but also from the smooth functioning of the Colombian economy.

Government attacks are not very common, running at less than 2.5 of per month over the 16 years of our dataset. This is because attacks are one-sided events while the government mainly seeks to clash with the guerrillas. Aerial bombardments, which are difficult for the guerrillas to contest effectively, are the most common government attack. But even these are uncommon because of the difficulty of finding sizable groups of guerrillas within Colombia's jungles and mountains.

Guerrilla	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Check point and/or road blockage	2	9	17	77	59	23	60	25	85	140	148	208	404	304	331	129	2,021
Infrastructure attack	56	47	58	295	173	83	57	43	36	15	33	66	130	133	188	80	1,493
Generic attack	63	49	58	109	74	64	88	97	84	82	72	128	122	102	144	79	1,415
Attack on means of transport	10	28	41	131	112	57	163	86	110	70	106	46	109	45	103	43	1,260
Bombing	21	11	15	43	119	45	69	46	47	45	60	61	98	83	110	58	931
Incursion	6	10	60	106	17	32	42	33	23	18	153	116	67	53	61	11	808
Ambush	54	50	80	73	69	47	56	36	45	62	54	37	38	25	30	36	792
Mine explosion	5		2	8	16	17	19	10	13	12	4	19	31	18	44	95	313
Electoral interference	1		15	5	2	1	86			1	128				6		245
Harassment to a fixed position	1	1	1	5	23	11	6	8	26	39	39	2	7	16	14	10	209
Massacre	3	14	11	12	4	6	4	13	9	5	11	32	18	18	14	12	186
Taking of town or village	55	22	2	1			1	2	1	12	30	21					147
Mass kidnapping	2		1							4	23	21	17	24	24	12	128
Local police station attack	7	1	3	4	19	6	20	18	25	4	3	3	9		1	2	125
Armed robbery	7	14	2	6	27	9	4	3		1	3	1					77
Propaganda explosion	1					1	3	5	7								17
Anti-kidnapping operation							1			1							2
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>740</b>	<b>1,050</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>1,070</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>10,169</b>

Paramilitaries	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Massacre	31	19	17	40	38	25	13	28	57	51	58	103	119	156	80	46	881
Incursion			2							6	68	38	36	16	26	11	203
Check point and/or road blockage				1			1		2	16	10	16	25	17	22	6	116
Generic attack	2		5	1	1	3		1	3	3	3	11	24	16	16	3	92
Mass kidnapping		2	3						2	6	7	4	18	11	10		63
Attack on means of transport							1		2	5	1	3	1	3	1		17
Bombing									2	1		1	6	1	2	4	17
Mine explosion									1			1	1	1	1	1	6
Aerial bombardment															1	1	2
Ambush		1									1						2
Infrastructure attack												1					1
Taking of town or village		1															1
Other government offensive operations										1							1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>1,402</b>

Government	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Aerial bombardment	7	5	12	9	7	3	2	1	1	2	17	9	12	10	24	26	147
Raid	3	13	25	14	11	6	2		1						4		79
Other government offensive operations	2	2	4	7	2	7	2	7	2	1	6	10	14		7	6	79
Anti-kidnapping operation	2	3	2	14	10	8	4	9	4	5	2		4	1	4	2	74
Check point and/or road blockage						3	1	3	2		7	1	2	1	4	4	28
Generic attack			2	1	1	2	2	1	2			1	5		2		19
Mine explosion						2	1	1			2	2	1	3			12
Incursion							1			1	1			2	2		7
Massacre	1				1						2	1	1			1	7
Ambush			2		1	1											4
Bombing										1		1	1	1			4
Artillery attack											1				1	1	3
Infrastructure attack			1			1											2
Harassment to a fixed position							1										1
Armed robbery				1													1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>467</b>

Table 4 Distribution of attacks by group and year

Figure 2 indicates that before 1998 the illegal paramilitaries engaged almost exclusively in massacres. They increased their number of massacres by a factor of eight between 1994 and 2001 and then reduced massacres enormously during the next two years. Incursions are the paramilitaries' only other moderately frequent activity although these began a steep descent in 1999, three years ahead of massacres.

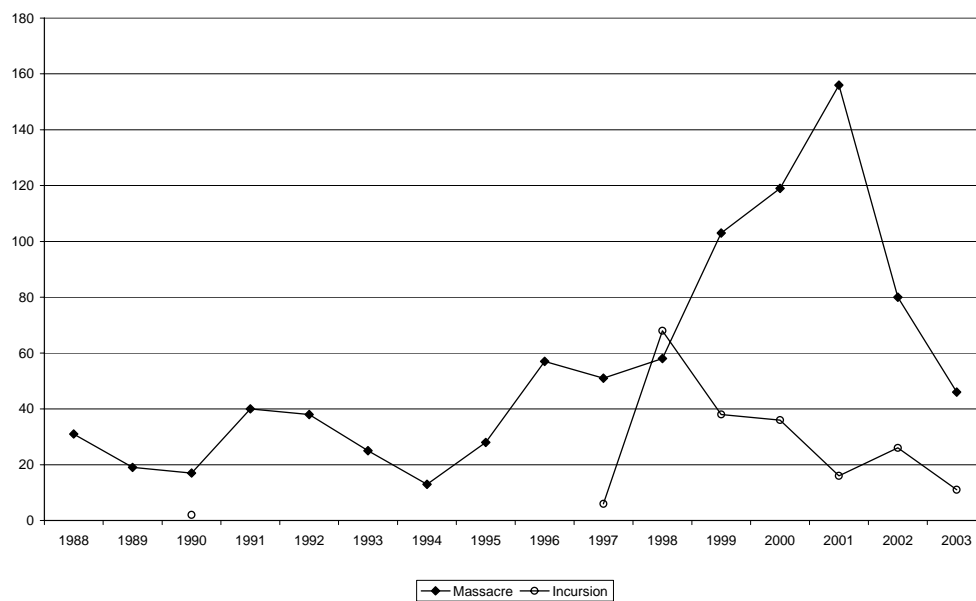


Figure 2 Number of paramilitary incursions and massacres

### 3.2.2 Killings of Civilians

Figure 3 gives the number of civilian casualties in attacks organized by group in every year from 1988 to 2003, where the series labelled “other” refers to attacks with unknown authors. The illegal paramilitaries are behind the majority of the attributed civilian casualties, closely followed by the guerrillas. The guerrillas have, however, surpassed the paramilitaries for the last two

years. Government forces tend not to cause civilian casualties in unilateral operations and have even improved their record in recent years.

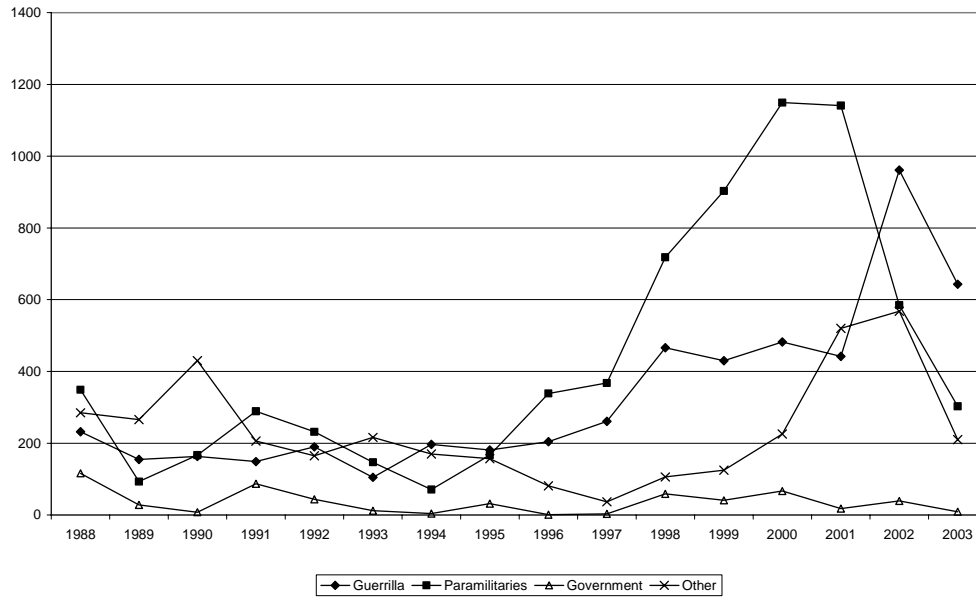


Figure 3 Civilian casualties due to attacks

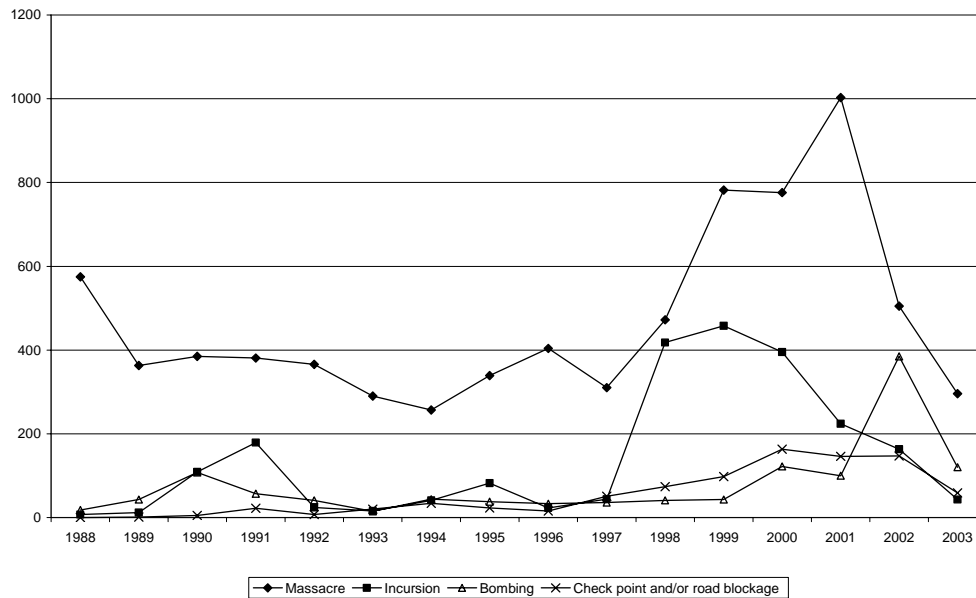


Figure 4 Killed civilians by type of action

Figure 4 gives the number of civilians killed each year arranged by type of attack, aggregating over all groups. Massacres top the table without a close competitor. Many civilians are killed through incursions and bombings. Road blockages are surprisingly dangerous for civilians.

Annex 1 separates the numbers of Figure 4 by group. Massacres account for almost one third of guerrilla killings of civilians in attacks. But bombings, incursions and road blockages are important, together accounting for slightly more civilian killings than massacres. We record few guerrilla killings in mine explosions. Interestingly, the guerrillas have only killed six civilians during mass kidnappings. Kidnapping is, after all, a business and the guerrillas, accordingly, exhibit strong discipline in these operations.

Table 4 and Annex 1 together demonstrate that the most prevalent guerrilla activities are not the ones in which they kill the most civilians. For example, the guerrillas killed few civilians in infrastructure attacks. Two thirds of the civilians they did kill in infrastructure attacks were killed in a single event in 1998 in Machuca, Antioquia when the ELN blew up an oil pipeline, leading to a fireball that reached a nearby village, killing 84 and injuring more than 60 people.

We stress the number of lives lost through road blockages. One of the most visible aspects of the Uribe government's security policy has been re-establishing government control over Colombia's sparse but vital network of roads. This effort has been popular largely because it has reclaimed vacationing possibilities, especially for the middle class. Some people have criticized the emphasis on roads as excessively expensive and propagandistic.

However, our numbers indicate that the policy has delivered significant benefits for civilian safety, albeit at a high financial cost.

The illegal paramilitaries have killed more than twice as many civilians in attacks as have the guerrillas. More than three fourths of these killings are in massacres. Of the remainder, well over half are in incursions. The paramilitaries operate dangerous road blockages as well.

Government forces have killed much fewer civilians in attacks than have non-state armed groups. More than one fourth of these were killed in 1988 in an incident that began with a massacre by the EPL (a third guerrilla group) at San Pedro de Urabá, Antioquia leading to a clash between the EPL and FARC in a populated area. The government intervened and bombarded a camp with heavy civilian casualties.

Figure 5 shows the pattern over time in civilian killings by the guerrillas in massacres, incursions and bombings. The first seems to trend up with much variation. The second jumps up between 1998 and 2002 but seems to revert back to the long-run average in 2003. The last has moved up steadily since 1995 and had a huge spike in 2002, largely due to several big bombings by the FARC. These incidents include the bombing of the “El Nogal” social club in Bogotá, the explosion of a gas canister bomb in a church where civilians had taken as refuge during guerrilla-paramilitary fighting in Bojayá and several bombs detonated in towns just outside the demilitarised zone where peace talks were conducted between the government and the FARC.<sup>8</sup> These bomb attacks occurred one year after the Colombian government arrested three Irishmen travelling on false papers in the demilitarised zone

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<sup>8</sup> In the Bojayá event there were 119 civilians deaths and 90 injuries and in the El Nogal bombing there were 32 deaths and 162 injuries of civilians.

which was de facto controlled by the FARC. The government accused the three of belonging to the IRA and, aside from some minor crimes, of transferring bomb-making skills to the FARC. However, it appears at the moment that the authorities will not be able to muster sufficient evidence to convict them.

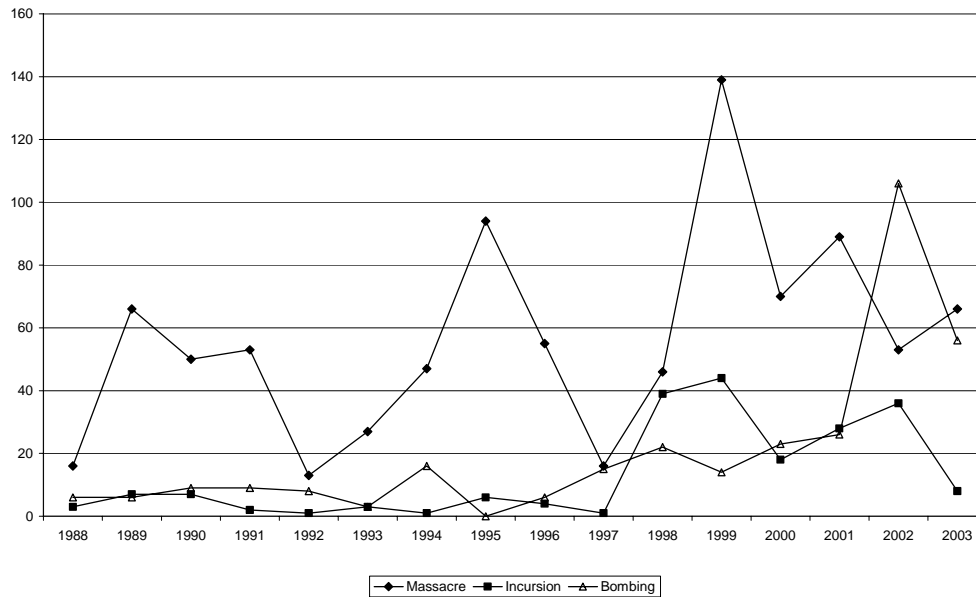


Figure 5 Killings of civilians during main guerrilla attacks

Figure 6 gives the dynamics of civilian killings in massacres, incursions and check points and/or road blockages for the paramilitaries. There are essentially only massacre killings until 1997 and even these were dropping steadily between 1991 and 1994. In 1995 these killings began a sharp ascent, peaking in 2001 before declining dramatically. From 1997 onwards the other two series rise to peaks in 2000 or 2001 and then fall back rapidly.

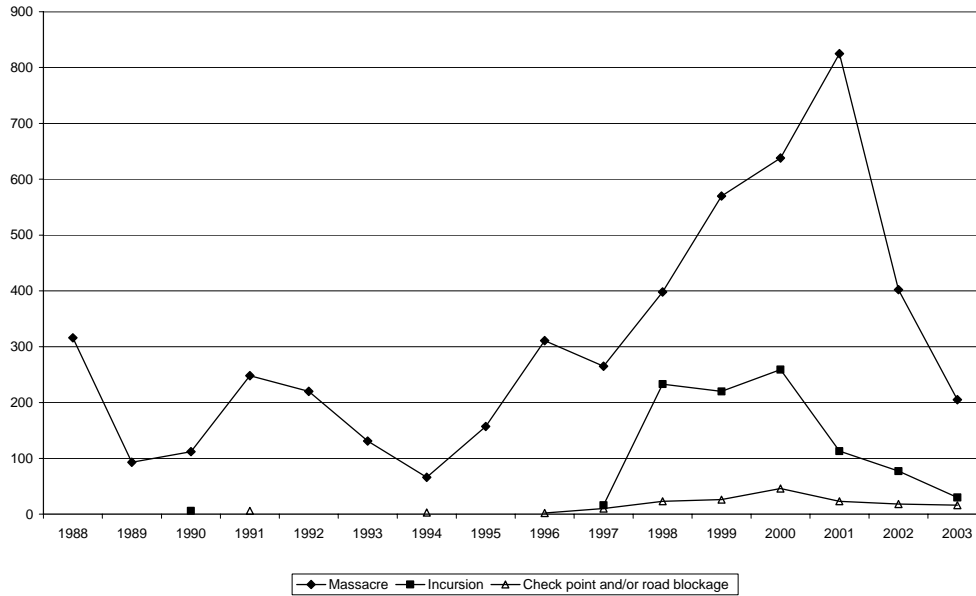


Figure 6 Killings of civilians during main paramilitary attacks

### 3.2.3. Civilian Injuries

Table 5 breaks down civilian injuries by type of attack for all groups combined. The list differs significantly from Figure 4 on killings. Bombings easily top Table 5 with massacres far behind. Massacres are targeted events where defenceless people are normally killed on purpose at close range and, therefore, perpetrators leave behind few people who are injured but not dead. Bombings, on the other hand, tend to be rather random and inaccurate, injuring many more people than they kill. Mine explosions, another type of bombing, also rank higher on the injury table than on the killing one. Incursions and road blocks occupy more or less the same place in the pecking order on both tables.

Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Bombing	35	48	38	89	70	39	62	60	58	98	107	135	267	489	974	508	3,077
Generic attack	45	43	69	20	19	45	20	16	32	66	23	89	143	81	97	49	857
Mine explosion	4		0	0	16	14	22	8	6	7	15	1	30	62	32	57	274
Check point and/or road blockage	0	0	0	7	12	4	11	8	34	23	18	12	40	20	13	16	218
Ambush	17	5	75	9	24	11	18	8	9	16	7	7	7	0	1	2	216
Incursion	1	5	1	3	0	0	1	3	2	2	51	28	32	13	29	20	191
Massacre	1	0	13	26	7	4	8	8	8	11	16	7	14	22	5	9	159
Infrastructure attack	17	0	0	25	11	1	6	1	0	0	65	0	6	16	0	0	148
Aerial bombardment	6	0	0	62	4	0	0	0	0	0	7	10	12	1	10	1	113
Attack on means of transport	0	0	5	8	1	3	8	1	2	3	8	8	2	0	6	1	56
Taking of town or village	32	0	0	0		0		0	13	5	2						52
Other government offensive operations	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	29	0	0	0	10	5		0	0	45
Harassment to a fixed position	0	0	0	3	6	2	2	1	5	4	8	0	0	0	2	2	35
Armed robbery	11	6	0	1	8	0	0	0			1						27
Local police station attack	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	10	2	0	1	3	1		0	3	25
Artillery attack											3					0	3
Raid	0	2	0	0	0	0	0		0						0		2
Propaganda explosion	1					0	0	0	0								1
Anti-kidnapping operation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0			0	0	0		0
Electoral interference	0		0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0			0		0
Mass kidnapping	0	0	0						0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>1,169</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>5,499</b>

Table 5 Civilian injured by year and type of attack

Annex 2 splits the injury numbers up by group. The guerrillas emerge as unrivalled in their propensity to injure civilians, accounting for more than 80% of all civilian injuries in attacks. As with killings, only a small percentage of these injuries come during the most common types of guerrilla attacks. Almost half of the civilian injuries generated by the guerrillas in attacks come from bombings.

Remarkably, while the paramilitaries have killed twice as many civilians in attacks as have the guerrillas, the latter have injured more than seven times as many civilians as have the former. Upon reflection, however, this makes sense since the paramilitaries' fundamental purpose is to kill civilians suspected of helping the guerrillas. They employ massacres both to eliminate present sources of guerrilla support and to deter other people from helping the guerrillas in the future. The effectiveness of this tactic depends on convincing people that if they support the guerrillas they will be less safe than they would be if they do not support the guerrillas.<sup>9</sup> Purely random violence such as shooting inaccurate bombs into villages, even villages known to contain some guerrilla supporters, is not useful for the paramilitaries and probably even counterproductive. Of course, the paramilitaries have made many mistakes. Their information on who is actually supporting the guerrillas is often inaccurate, leading them to kill the "wrong" people in their own terms. These mistakes hurt their cause because they weaken the link between guerrilla support and retribution. But few Colombians would doubt that the paramilitaries have significantly raised the risk to civilians who support the

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<sup>9</sup> Here we draw on ideas that are developed very fully in Kalyvas (2004).

guerrillas. In other words, paramilitary violence has a definite targeted element and is not purely random.

The guerrillas also use massacres to target government-supporting civilians. But, as noted above, they also work hard to disrupt the Colombian economy. For the latter purpose the rather random nature of bombing is quite effective. Sowing fear, discouraging both foreign and domestic investment, forcing expensive repairs and jamming infrastructure arteries can be pursued quite effectively, and in a cheap and dirty fashion, through fairly random bombings that injure many civilians.

The government inflicts the fewest civilian injuries of all groups. Aerial bombardments once again are at the top for the government. In fact, there is a close parallel with the killing figures because most of the injuries in this category again come from a single event, when in 1991 during an aerial bombardment in El Bagre, Antioquia dozens of people were injured.

The highlights of the injury information for the guerrillas are in Figure 1 that gives the series for bombings, incursions and mine explosions. Civilian injuries from guerrilla bombings gyrate considerably but have generally been increasing rapidly. The series for mine explosions grows steadily since 1999 while the incursion series peaks in 1998 and then declines. The increasing use of bombs and mines reveals an increasingly indiscriminate, terrorising FARC. We think the big spike in bombings, and hence injuries, in 2002 may be an attempt to force the Colombian Army to tie up resources in defending cities, freeing the guerrillas in the countryside.

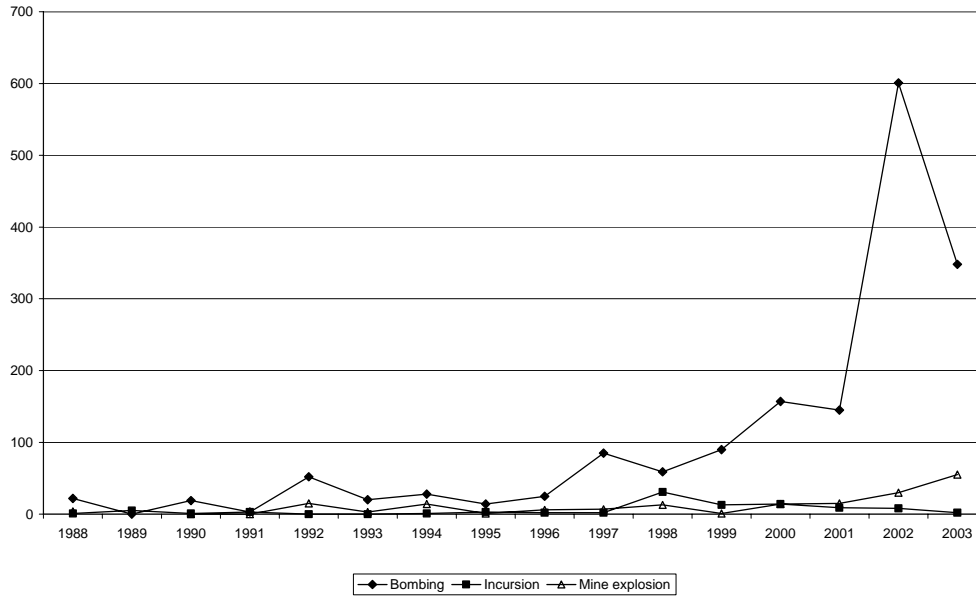


Figure 7 Civilian injuries during guerrilla actions

### 3.2.4. Killings per attack

Table 6 gives the time series and grand totals for civilian killings per attack of various types for each group. We do not print these ratios for group-type combinations that occur very infrequently, because in these cases the numbers are both unreliable and uninteresting. For example, 1.67 civilians died on average in government artillery attacks but there were only three of them over all the years in our dataset. We see, unsurprisingly, that massacres are very lethal. For the guerrillas they beat bomb attacks by a factor of ten. Check points and/or road blockages are not very lethal per occurrence. It is the high frequency of bombings and check points and/or road blockages through which the guerrillas kill so many people, not their lethality per event. For the paramilitaries incursions are the only types of attacks they utilize other than massacres that pose any danger to civilians. The only types of government attack that is relatively frequent and appears relatively dangerous to civilians

are aerial bombardments but, again, the danger of these actions would virtually disappear if we were to remove the one big event from 1988.

Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Aerial bombardment	16.83	3.00	0.44	0.14	1.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.08	0.00	0.41	0.04	1.15
Ambush	0.12	0.08	0.44	0.08	0.31	0.10	0.09	0.16	0.08	0.14	0.04	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.04	0.17	0.15
Anti-kidnapping operation	2.50	4.00	0.00	6.00	1.00	1.67	0.00	0.00		7.00			0.00	0.00	0.00		2.43
Armed robbery	2.14	0.14	0.00	0.25	0.29	0.00	0.00	1.33			0.00						0.42
Artillery attack											5.00					0.00	2.50
Attack on means of transport	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.02
Bombing	0.21	1.37	3.62	0.67	0.19	0.07	0.24	0.10	0.29	0.44	0.41	0.27	0.35	0.49	1.03	1.07	0.51
Check point and/or road blockage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.05	0.09	0.22	0.24	0.05	0.19	0.36	0.23	0.19	0.21	0.22	0.31	0.21
Electoral interference	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00			0.33		0.01
Generic attack	0.82	0.43	1.00	0.26	0.22	0.53	0.33	0.12	0.13	0.37	0.73	0.55	1.71	1.23	0.73	0.39	0.66
Harassment to a fixed position	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.17	0.05
Incursion	0.50	0.88	0.52	0.05	0.13	0.11	0.04	0.33	0.20	0.77	1.36	2.28	3.37	3.28	1.41	2.11	1.57
Infrastructure attack	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.94	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.06
Local police station attack	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.13		0.00	0.50	0.07
Mass kidnapping	0.00	0.00	0.00						0.00	0.00	1.14	0.54	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	0.28
Massacre	7.64	4.79	5.51	5.61	5.44	5.02	5.65	5.51	5.53	5.17	6.28	5.22	5.34	5.27	4.95	4.59	5.44
Mine explosion	1.33		0.00	0.00	0.10	0.48	0.23	0.33	0.47	0.17	1.29	0.15	0.20	0.23	0.29	0.17	0.27
Other government offensive operations	2.00	0.00	0.75	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.00	2.25	0.88	0.45		3.33	0.50	0.76
Propaganda explosion	0.00					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00								0.00
Raid	0.00	0.86	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00						0.00		0.14
Taking of town or village	0.67	0.14	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00	0.08	0.68	0.08						0.43
Grand Total	1.89	1.24	1.32	0.56	0.53	0.67	0.37	0.77	0.78	0.76	1.02	1.33	1.12	1.34	0.80	0.79	0.93

Table 6 Ratio of Killed Civilians per Attack, by type and year

Figure 8 gives the series for each group of the number of civilians killed in attacks divided by the number of attacks. None of these series have really strong trends over time. As expected, the paramilitaries always kill far more civilians per event than do the other groups. The government is erratic due to its small number of attacks but generally somewhat more lethal to civilians per attack than are the guerrillas.

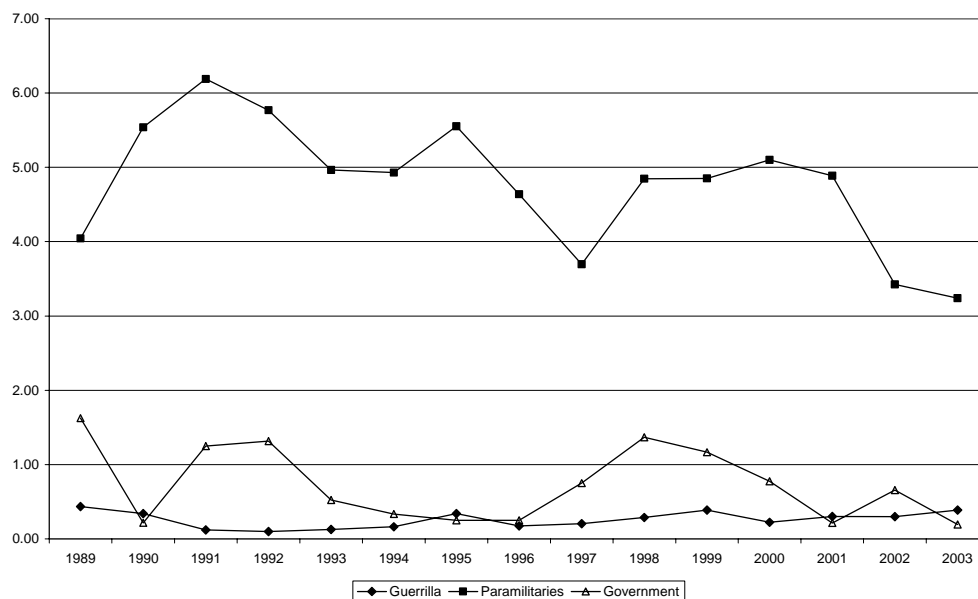


Figure 8 Ratio of killed civilians per attack, by group

### 3.2.5. Injuries per attack

Table 10 gives time series and grand totals for civilian injuries per attack of various types for each group. The civilian injury rate from guerrilla bomb explosions rose steadily over the years before leaping up in 2002. Injury rates per guerrilla mine explosion have risen steadily over the years.

Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Aerial bombardment	1.00	0.00	0.00	8.86	0.80	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	2.50	1.00	0.14	0.45	0.04	0.95
Ambush	0.29	0.09	1.03	0.18	0.34	0.22	0.32	0.25	0.23	0.28	0.14	0.22	0.19	0.00	0.04	0.07	0.29
Anti-kidnapping operation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00			0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00
Armed robbery	1.57	0.43	0.00	0.25	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.50						0.39
Artillery attack											3.00					0.00	1.50
Attack on means of transport	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.06	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.08	0.17	0.02	0.00	0.06	0.02	0.04
Bombing	1.06	2.53	1.81	1.82	0.47	0.46	0.59	0.86	1.04	2.04	1.55	1.59	2.12	4.45	6.49	5.77	2.43
Check point and/or road blockage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.21	0.17	0.24	0.38	0.41	0.15	0.12	0.06	0.10	0.07	0.04	0.14	0.11
Electoral interference	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00				0.00	0.00
Generic attack	0.58	0.98	1.10	0.23	0.28	0.66	0.26	0.19	0.42	1.02	0.37	0.67	1.16	0.69	0.64	0.91	0.63
Harassment to a fixed position	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.38	0.26	0.20	0.25	0.17	0.22	0.10	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.17	0.33	0.18
Incursion	0.17	0.63	0.04	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.17	0.10	0.09	0.24	0.24	0.39	0.30	0.35	1.11	0.25
Infrastructure attack	0.26	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.05	0.01	0.10	0.02	0.00	0.00	1.91	0.00	0.05	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.09
Local police station attack	0.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.04	0.45	0.08	0.00	0.33	1.00	0.13		0.00	0.75	0.17
Mass kidnapping	0.00	0.00	0.00						0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Massacre	0.01	0.00	0.19	0.39	0.11	0.07	0.22	0.13	0.11	0.18	0.21	0.05	0.10	0.12	0.05	0.15	0.12
Mine explosion	0.67		0.00	0.00	0.76	0.61	0.73	0.44	0.35	0.58	2.14	0.05	0.86	1.29	0.78	0.66	0.73
Other government offensive operations	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	4.83	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.25	0.45		0.00	0.00	0.82
Propaganda explosion	1.00					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00								0.06
Raid	0.00	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00						0.00		0.04
Taking of town or village	0.63	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00	1.08	0.26	0.15						0.43
Grand Total	0.40	0.31	0.47	0.30	0.21	0.23	0.21	0.31	0.29	0.41	0.33	0.35	0.46	0.66	0.95	1.06	0.46

Table 7 Ratio of Injured Civilians per Attack, by type and year

Figure 9 shows the path over time of civilian injuries per attack for each of the three groups. Again, the government series fluctuates wildly due to its small number of attacks. But it is often quite injurious per event. The guerrilla and paramilitary curves trend up and track each other quite well. The latter fact is rather surprising since the guerrillas injure vastly more people than the paramilitaries and hold a much more diverse portfolio of attacks compared to the paramilitaries. The latter group is almost completely specialized in massacres which do not cause huge numbers of injuries. The guerrillas do many bomb and mine explosions that injure numerous civilians but also perpetrate scores of economic attacks that injure few civilians. Overall the guerrillas attack much more than the paramilitaries and end up injuring roughly equal numbers of civilians per attack.

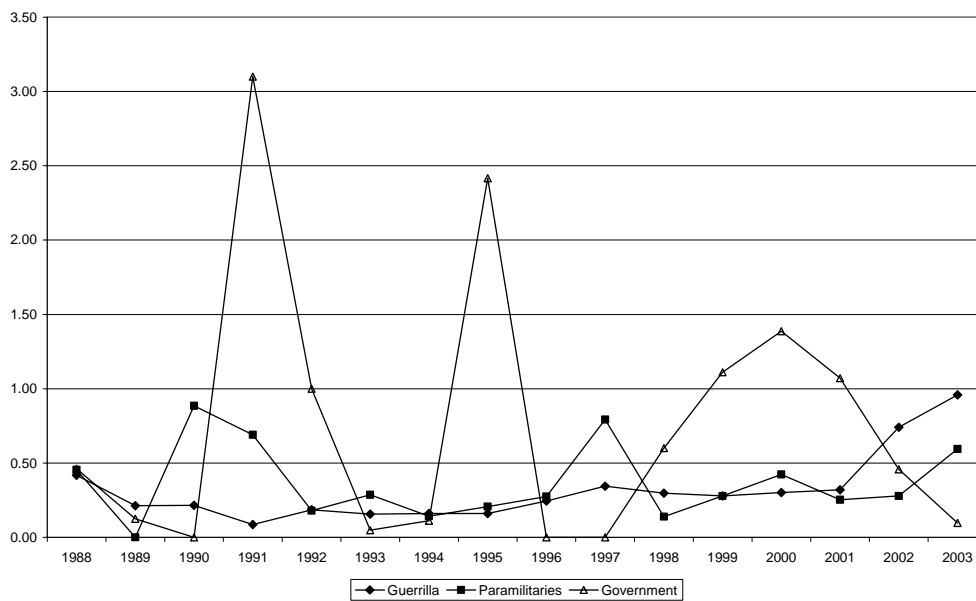


Figure 9 Ratio of killed civilians per attack, by group

### 3.2.6. The FARC vs. the ELN

We could use our dataset to produce a full paper on the contrast between the FARC and the ELN. Here we will just make a few broad observations regarding civilian victimisation. Table 8 gives the breakdown of actions for each organization. It shows the ELN more focused on economic disruption than the FARC, with the sum of infrastructure attacks, check points and/or road blockages and attacks on means of transport occupying a larger place in the ELN portfolio than in the FARC's. The FARC, on the other hand emphasizes massacres, bombings and incursions more than the ELN. This difference shows up in the casualty per event ratios graphed in Figure 10 where the ELN is always below the FARC except in 1998 due to the Machuca incident. Note also the strong rise in FARC lethality per event since 1998.

Table 8 also displays the ELN virtually disappearing as an attacking force in recent years. However, the human security benefits of the development are somewhat attenuated by the ELN's relatively less lethal character for a Colombian armed group.

ELN Attacks	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Check point and/or road blockage	1	8	10	6	18	9	13	2	14	63	46	68	208	141	81	21	709
Infrastructure attack	43	43	40	64	80	47	32	28	25	4	11	18	77	49	22	10	593
Attack on means of transport	5	19	17	24	50	26	57	23	55	23	30	17	75	22	13	3	459
Bombing	15	7	8	12	33	24	31	20	18	18	28	19	39	26	6	3	307
Ambush	17	27	27	8	27	8	21	7	10	23	16	5	11	5	3	1	216
Incursion	4	6	11	6	2	4	7	8	5	2	19	14	8	3	6	1	106
Electoral interference	1		15	1			48				8						73
Harassment to a fixed position		1			8	3	2		13	18	12		1	3	2		63
Taking of town or village	21	19	1							4	4	2					51
Massacre		4	6	1	1	1		2	1	1	2	3	3	4	2	2	33
Grand Total	141	167	160	141	254	145	244	125	175	186	192	185	451	281	161	53	3061

FARC Attacks	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Check point and/or road blockage	1		1	20	13	7	16	12	54	48	49	85	95	93	171	73	738
Infrastructure attack	3		8	79	34	6	5	5	4	3	15	10	24	53	137	55	441
Attack on means of transport	2	1	15	48	27	10	39	28	29	32	51	20	25	15	67	31	440
Ambush	21	14	35	24	26	20	22	19	23	29	27	19	21	17	23	22	362
Bombing	2	1	3	13	15	9	15	16	13	12	15	32	42	39	76	34	337
Incursion	1	2	8	17	2	13	13	7	12	12	49	52	33	20	33	5	279
Massacre	2	4	2	8	1	4	3	10	6	4	7	23	12	12	12	8	118
Harassment to a fixed position				1	4	8	4	3	4	7	15	18	1	2	12	8	92
Electoral interference					2	1		11			1	32					52
Taking of town or village	14	1		1					1	7	14	9					47
Grand Total	61	31	89	258	166	108	180	152	214	210	330	327	337	314	626	311	3714

Table 8 Civilian victims during selected types of attacks of the FARC and ELN guerrillas

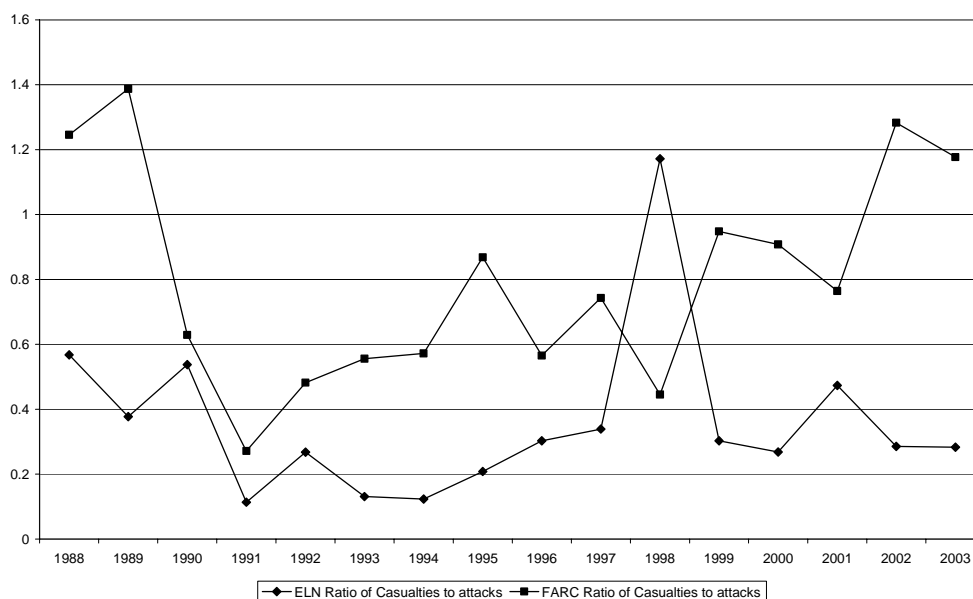


Figure 10 Ratio of civilian casualties to number of attacks for the FARC and ELN guerrillas

### 3.3. Clashes

Table 11 gives the number of clashes and the number of civilians killed in these clashes for each combination of groups clashing in each year.

Government-guerrilla clashes are by far the most common and have risen dramatically since 1999. Government-paramilitary clashes have always been rare but have shown a tentative upward trend in recent years. There were hardly any guerrilla-paramilitary clashes until the sharp rise that began in 1997 and was reversed in 2003. Guerrilla-paramilitary clashes are much more lethal to civilians than are guerrilla-paramilitary clashes.

Year	Government-Guerrilla		Government-Paramilitaries		Guerrilla-Paramilitaries		Total
	Number of clashes	Civilians killed	Number of clashes	Civilians killed	Number of clashes	Civilians killed	
1988	200	16					200
1989	192	10	4	1	2	0	198
1990	366	26	3	1	2	0	371
1991	461	18			1	0	462
1992	533	35	2	0	1	2	536
1993	500	43					500
1994	468	25			4	30	472
1995	382	42	1	0	1	0	384
1996	459	13	2	0	3	0	464
1997	388	25	3	0	13	0	404
1998	328	64	6	0	30	19	364
1999	311	52	1	4	20	35	332
2000	498	112	2	0	61	35	561
2001	560	47	1	2	74	115	635
2002	768	67	4	0	124	191	896
2003	767	24	12	2	57	47	836
<b>Total</b>	<b>7181</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>7615</b>

Table 9 Clashes by groups clashing and killed civilians during clashes

#### 4. Conclusion

The guerrillas in the Colombian conflict have a character that is fundamentally different from that of their illegal paramilitary enemies. The paramilitaries dedicate themselves primarily to deterring civilians from supporting the guerrillas. The guerrillas also deter support for their enemies but simultaneously concentrate enormous energy on interference with the economy and state control. Economic disruption activities are dangerous for civilians, but significantly less so than are deterrence actions.

We believe that this simple insight will adjust the perceptions of even many careful students of the Colombian conflict. It is clear that the media overwhelmingly emphasize the most violent stories and the conflict following the dictum “If it bleeds it leads”. This effect seems strongest in the international media where few Colombia stories other than the particularly large massacres tend to be reported. This practice is easily understandable but distorts reality. Consumers of media reports almost inevitably come to view the Colombian conflict as consisting only of a succession of massacres with the paramilitaries being the most frequent perpetrators.

Vital practical implications on combating Colombia’s armed groups flow from a sound understanding of their differing natures. Here we offer some preliminary thoughts as we begin to think through these issues systematically.

Strategy for defeating the paramilitaries should differ fundamentally from strategy to defeat the guerrillas. The paramilitaries are brutal and vicious killers. But there is a logic underlying their activity. Undermining this logic can destabilize their foundations. By building strong and clean networks of

civilian support the Colombian government can challenge the paramilitaries' will to fight on. Of course, military confrontation against the paramilitaries must also contribute to pushing them from the scene. But it would be foolish for Colombia to pursue only the military option against illegal paramilitarism when there exists of less costly track that can be pursued at lower cost and with significant potential for delivering results.

The guerrillas, on the other hand, have a wider diversity of activity which is related to greater difficulty in eliminating their presence. Guerrilla actions strongly suggest that they view the Colombian economic system as fundamentally illegitimate.<sup>10</sup> Such a perception would seriously constrain the potential for a broad compromise with mainstream Colombian society. The experience of the failed peace negotiations of 1998-2002 tends to confirm this pessimistic assessment. Accordingly, we believe that the centrepiece of government strategy toward the guerrillas must be to enhance the possibility of a negotiated compromise through damaging the guerrillas militarily in the field. There are signs that this approach is working against the ELN. However, as we have seen, the FARC is a stronger and more ruthless adversary and is still far from collapse.

We believe our general approach to the Colombian conflict can fruitfully be applied to other conflicts. Of course, the first step in this programme is to develop new and very detailed conflict datasets. This will require substantial investment but can generate large rewards. With sufficiently rich information on types of activities we can develop useful

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<sup>10</sup> We believe that Colombia has serious poverty and inequality problems that must be addressed but we roundly reject the notion that the Colombian economic or social system or the Colombian State is illegitimate. Nevertheless, in order to defeat the guerrillas it is important to strive seriously to understand guerrilla perceptions.

characterizations of the nature of the world's armed groups. Identifying precise patterns of civilian victimisation by both state and non-state armed groups can significantly advance our understanding of threats to human security. We think that inaccurate perceptions of armed groups are common; media filters tend to favour lurid stories and opponents try to propagandize outsiders and even fool themselves. Explaining the presence of diverse non-state organisations, including paramilitaries fighting sometimes for and sometimes against state authorities, presents a big challenge for conflict researchers. We suggest that the path of steepest ascent in this research programme is to determine systematically what armed groups actually do.

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## Annex 1

### Civilians Killed in Attacks, distribution by group and year

Guerrilla	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Massacre	16	66	50	53	13	27	47	94	55	16	46	139	70	89	53	66	900
Bombing	6	6	9	9	8	3	16	0	6	15	22	14	23	26	106	56	325
Generic attack	26	18	13	9	5	7	20	5	4	15	32	23	55	24	13	11	280
Incursion	3	7	7	2	1	3	1	6	4	1	39	44	18	28	36	8	208
Check point and/or road blockage	0	0	0	2	3	1	7	4	1	18	10	20	28	38	50	19	201
Infrastructure attack	3	0	0	1	12	1	0	0	0	0	66	1	1	8	3	1	97
Ambush	7	2	21	4	11	4	5	5	3	8	2	0	5	0	1	5	83
Mine explosion	4		0	0	2	1	2	1	8	2	9	0	3	1	11	15	59
Taking of town or village	34	3	0	0		0		0	1	13	1						52
Armed robbery	15	2	0	1	7	0	0	4			0						29
Attack on means of transport	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	3	17
Anti-kidnapping operation										7							7
Harassment to a fixed position	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	7
Local police station attack	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	1		0	0	7
Mass kidnapping	0		0							0	0	6	0	0	0	0	6
Electoral interference	0		0	0	0	0				0	0				2		2
Propaganda explosion	0					0	0	0	0								0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>2,280</b>
Paramilitaries	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Massacre	316	93	112	248	220	131	66	157	311	265	398	570	638	825	402	205	4,957
Incursion			6							16	233	220	259	113	77	30	954
Generic attack	18		26	6	5	8		4	6	7	11	29	118	109	38	5	390
Check point and/or road blockage				6			3		2	10	23	26	46	23	18	16	173
Mass kidnapping		0	0						0		33	9	0	7	0	0	49
Bombing									0	3		0	0	8	4	0	15
Attack on means of transport							0		1	2	0	0	0	0	2		5
Aerial bombardment															0		0
Ambush		0									0						0
Infrastructure attack												0					0
Mine explosion									0			0		0	0	0	0
Taking of town or village		0															0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>1,061</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>6,543</b>
Government	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Aerial bombardment	101	12	4	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	9	1	137
Anti-kidnapping operation	5	8	0	24	2	5	0	0					0	0	0		44
Other government offensive operations	4	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	9	7	5		10	1	42
Massacre					8						7	3	3			4	25
Generic attack		0	0		0	3	0	0				3	14		2		22
Check point and/or road blockage						1		0	1		16	1	0	0	2	0	21
Mine explosion						0	3	2			0	3	0	3			11
Ambush			0		9	0											9
Raid	0	6	1	0	0	0	0		0						0		7
Bombing										3		2	1	0			6
Artillery attack											5					0	5
Incursion							0			0	4			0	0		4
Harassment to a fixed position							0										0
Infrastructure attack			0			0											0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>333</b>
Other	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Massacre	226	186	213	75	107	128	96	85	38	29	20	39	26	77	35	5	1,385
Bombing	1	20	67	24	20	3	9	7	10	0	6	7	20	20	45	38	297
Generic attack	20	1	24	7	5	18	5	1	0	2	3	18	23	11	58	5	201
Mine explosion	4			0	0	10	2	3	0		0		4	7	1		31
Incursion				0		0					16	0	3	0	3		22
Ambush	0	2	11	0	2	1	0	0								0	16
Check point and/or road blockage		0		0	0		0	1			4	0	0	0	0		5
Local police station attack	1	0	0	0	0		0	0	0				0		0	2	3
Harassment to a fixed position				0	0		0	0							2		2
Attack on means of transport	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0		0	1
Aerial bombardment													0				0
Armed robbery		0															0
Electoral interference							0					0					0
Infrastructure attack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0			0
Mass kidnapping													0	0	0	0	0
Other government offensive operations											0						0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>1,963</b>



## Annex 2

### Civilians Injured in Attacks, distribution by group and year

Guerrilla	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Bombing	22	0	19	3	52	20	28	14	25	85	59	90	157	145	601	348	1,668
Generic attack	14	36	30	6	11	15	14	9	21	25	23	48	45	22	26	30	375
Check point and/or road blockage	0	0	0	6	12	4	11	8	34	17	10	10	27	19	11	14	183
Mine explosion	4		0	0	15	3	14	1	6	7	13	1	14	15	30	55	178
Infrastructure attack	17	0	0	25	8	1	5	1	0	0	65	0	1	14	0	0	137
Ambush	14	4	8	9	9	11	16	4	9	16	7	7	7	0	1	2	124
Incursion	1	5	1	3	0	0	1	3	2	2	31	13	14	9	8	2	95
Attack on means of transport	0	0	5	8	1	2	8	0	2	3	8	8	2	0	6	0	53
Taking of town or village	32	0	0	0		0		0	13	5	2						52
Massacre	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8	0	0	9	0	10	4	1	3	36
Harassment to a fixed position	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	1	5	4	8	0	0	0	1	2	29
Armed robbery	11	6	0	1	8	0	0	0			1						27
Local police station attack	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	9	2	0	1	3	1		0	2	23
Propaganda explosion	1					0	0	0	0								1
Anti-kidnapping operation										0							0
Electoral interference	0		0	0	0	0	0			0	0						0
Mass kidnapping	0		0							0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>2,981</b>

Paramilitaries	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Generic attack	15		20	7	4	6		6	11	36	0	27	59	29	16	9	245
Incursion			0							0	17	15	18	4	16	18	88
Massacre	0	0	3	22	3	2	2	0	8	10	3	5	4	16	4	4	86
Bombing									0	13		0	6	5	5	12	41
Check point and/or road blockage					0		0		0	6	0	2	1	1	2	2	14
Mine explosion									0					1	1	2	4
Ambush		0									0						0
Infrastructure attack												0					0
Aerial bombardment															0		0
Attack on means of transport							0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taking of town or village		0															0
Mass kidnapping			0	0					0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>478</b>

Government	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Aerial bombardment	6	0	0	62	4	0	0	0	0	0	7	10	12	1	10	1	113
Other government offensive operations	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	29	0	0	0	10	5		0	0	45
Check point and/or road blockage						0		0	0		8	0	12	0	0	0	20
Generic attack		0	0		0	1	1	0				0	8		6		16
Mine explosion						0	0	0			0	0	3	13			16
Ambush			0		14	0											14
Bombing										0		0	3	1			4
Artillery attack											3					0	3
Massacre					0						0	0	0			2	2
Raid	0	2	0	0	0	0	0		0						0		2
Incursion							0			0	0			0	0		0
Infrastructure attack				0		0											0
Harassment to a fixed position							0										0
Anti-kidnapping operation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0	0	0		0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>235</b>

Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Bombing	13	48	19	86	18	19	34	46	33	0	48	45	101	338	368	148	1,364
Generic attack	16	7	19	7	4	23	5	1	0	5	0	14	31	30	49	10	221
Ambush	3	1	67	0	1	0	2	4								0	78
Mine explosion	0			0	1	11	8	7	0		2		13	33	1		76
Massacre	1	0	10	3	4	2	6	0	0	1	4	2	0	2	0	0	35
Infrastructure attack	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0			0	0	5	2			11
Incursion				0		0					3	0	0	0	5		8
Harassment to a fixed position				3	0		2	0							1		6
Attack on means of transport	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0					0		1	3
Local police station attack	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				0		0	1	2
Check point and/or road blockage		0		1	0		0	0			0	0	0	0	0		1
Aerial bombardment													0				0
Other government offensive operations											0						0
Armed robbery		0															0
Electoral interference							0					0					0
Mass kidnapping													0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>1,805</b>



