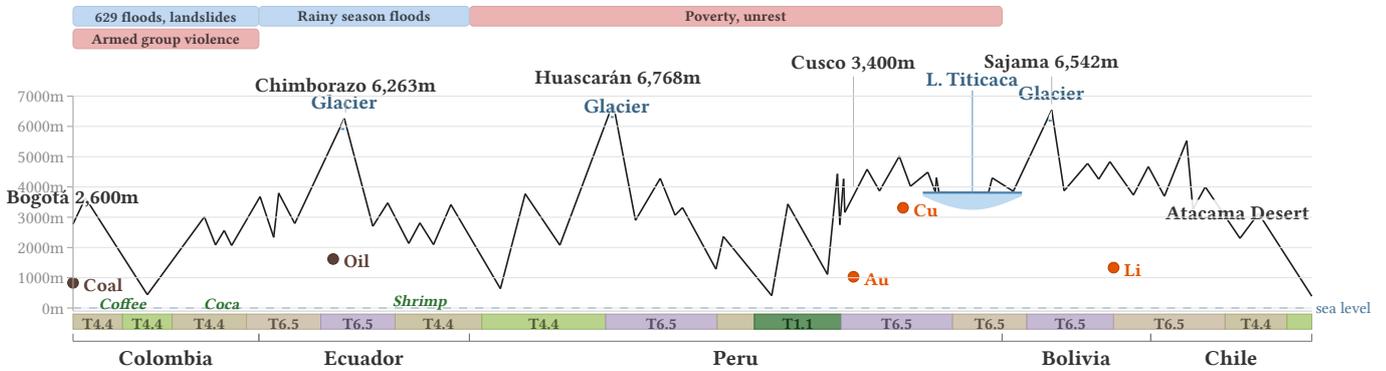


Prayer Briefing

Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope

Peru · Bolivia · Ecuador · Colombia · Chile 52.1 million people

2026-03-13



This Week

Mar 13 Colombia

Colombia is facing a complex, protracted, and rapidly intensifying humanitarian crisis driven by the escalation of internal armed conflict, rising levels of social violence, floods, and forced displacement.

Mar 12 Colombia

Every single hour throughout 2025, the life of a student or teacher in Colombia was placed in jeopardy.

Mar 09 Peru

Although inflation has eased since reaching a 26-year high in 2022, recovery remains uneven. Poverty persists at around 29 percent, disproportionately affecting rural areas.

Mar 13 Ecuador

The humanitarian impact continues to rise as the 2026 rainy season intensifies across Ecuador. From 1 January to the present, the country has recorded 629 flood events and 612 landslides.

Mar 12 Ecuador

The rainy season continues to affect most of Ecuador, and as of 11 March it had caused 605 flood events and more than 580 landslides, leading to casualties and widespread damage.

The Place

For three thousand years, Quechua and Aymara peoples have farmed terraces cut into the flanks of the world's longest mountain chain — 3,000 varieties of potato, quinoa at altitudes where the air thins to half its sea-level density, llama herds moving across the puna grasslands, all of it sustained by glacial meltwater channelled through canals older than the Inca empire. The glaciers are the covenant: wet-season snow stored as ice, released through the dry months when no rain falls, feeding rivers that irrigate the terraces, water the cities, and sustain the cloud forests where coca and coffee grow in the transition zone between ice and jungle.

What Is Breaking

Now the glaciers have lost half their mass. The water they release each year is less than the year before, and what remains is contested: Glencore's Las Bambas mine takes 400,000 tonnes of copper annually for Chinese smelters from the same watershed where Quechua farmers irrigate their fields; Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni — the world's largest lithium reserve — is being extracted by Chinese joint ventures consuming 65% of the region's fresh water to power electric vehicles in cities that will never see the salt flat dry.

The Stakes

In Colombia, 7.1 million people have been driven from their homes by armed groups who fund themselves by taxing coca farmers earning \$0.50 a kilo for a product that retails at \$100 a gram. In Ecuador, 629 floods and 716 cartel killings in three months. The crisis of the Andes is not that the mountains cannot sustain their people — it is that the mountains' wealth is extracted for others while the people who tend the terraces are denied the water, land, and safety to continue the work of millennia.

755	7.1M	---	83%
people killed	displaced	food insecure	aid unfunded

Precipitation 339% of normal; temperatures +11.1°C above baseline; fire activity elevated (137 detections).

Lives Lived Here

Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope

Before dawn on the Altiplano above Lake Titicaca, an Aymara woman checks the frost on her potato terraces — at 3,800 metres, a single night of hard frost can destroy a season's crop, and the traditional method of reading cloud patterns to predict frost is failing as the climate shifts. Her terraces hold varieties her grandmother planted: papa amarga for freeze-drying into chuño, papa huayro for the valley market in Juliaca, quinoa for the family and for the cooperative that sells to Lima. The water that irrigates her field comes from a canal her community maintains collectively — pre-Columbian stonework patched with concrete, fed by glacial melt from the Cordillera Real that carries less water each year.

Downstream, her cousin's husband works the coca fields in the Yungas — not by choice but because no other crop pays enough to keep the family above subsistence in a zone where the state provides nothing: no roads, no clinics, no schools. The coca he harvests enters two streams: some goes to the legal market for coca tea and traditional chewing; the rest goes to processing labs controlled by trafficking networks that pay him \$1.50 a kilo.

Across the border in Peru, a Quechua farmer near Cusco loads quinoa onto a truck bound for the Juliaca market where it will be bought by families from the mining towns — the copper miners whose wages come from Las Bambas, whose tailings contaminate the same river system that feeds the farmer's irrigation canal. In Ecuador, a shrimp farmer on the coast of Manabí harvests from ponds carved out of former mangrove forest — 80% of the coast's mangroves converted to aquaculture, the artisanal fishers who once worked the estuaries pushed inland.

These circuits — terrace to market, glacier to canal, coca field to processing lab, mine to port — interlock through the daily acts of people whose lives depend on each connection holding. What is fraying: the glacial melt that feeds the canals is declining each decade; the coca economy traps families in violence; the mining water that should reach farms is diverted to extraction; and the young people who would maintain the terraces are migrating to Lima and Arequipa, sending remittances home but leaving the ancient infrastructure untended.

Copper, lithium, gold, coal, coca, coffee, and shrimp leave the Andes annually — billions in commodity value flowing to Chinese smelters, Swiss trading houses, European utilities, and North American consumers. What returns: 5% royalties, contaminated rivers, depleted aquifers, and the mercury that will remain in the water table for generations.

What Presses

The weight on Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope

Copper leaves Peru at 400,000 tonnes a year from Las Bambas and Antapaccay — Glencore and Hudbay Minerals, Swiss and Canadian, shipping to Chinese smelters while Peru captures 5–8% in royalties and Quechua communities get contaminated rivers. **Lithium** leaves Bolivia from the Salar de Uyuni — 21 million tonnes of reserves extracted by state enterprise and Chinese joint ventures (Ganzhou Liyuan, CITIC), consuming 65% of fresh **water** in the continent's driest highlands while Aymara pastoral communities watch their aquifers deplete. **Coal** leaves Colombia at 35 million tonnes a year from Cerrejón — Glencore's open pit in La Guajira, shipped to European power plants, having displaced over 2,000 Wayúu families and diverted the Ranchería River in one of South America's driest regions. **Gold** leaves Peru's Madre de Dios through laundering networks — 100,000 hectares of Amazon deforested, rivers poisoned with mercury, indigenous Huitoto and Matsigenka communities losing their primary protein source to contamination. **Coca** leaves Colombia's Putumayo, Cauca, and Nariño as cocaine — campesino families producing under coercion from FARC dissidents and the ELN, earning \$1–2 a day, while armed groups tax every step of the chain. **Coffee** and **shrimp** leave Colombia and Ecuador through commodity traders who set prices that keep 500,000 smallholder farmers below production costs in bad years. The Andes are mined from above and below, and the wealth flows out through ports that the communities who bear the cost will never see.

Glacial retreat → Reduced dry-season river flow → Mining-agriculture water competition → Community protests and road blockades → State repression (69 killed in Peru 2022–23 protests) → Displacement of farming families into coca zones (PER, BOL — 29% poverty rate, zero state services in yungas)

Armed group territorial control → Coca coercion of campesino families (\$0.50–1.50/kg) → Cocaine trafficking revenue → Weaponisation → Attacks on schools and civilians (COL — 7.1M displaced, hourly threat to students) → Displacement → Host community water strain → Further displacement

Cartel transshipment competition → 716 killed in 3 months (ECU) → Convergence with 629 flood events → Dual humanitarian emergency → Overwhelmed state response → Regulatory vacuum → Further cartel expansion into flooded zones

In Peru, copper mined for the global green transition consumes the same glacial meltwater that Quechua communities need for irrigation — decarbonisation in consumer countries reproduces colonial extraction patterns in green form, with water as the contested medium.

In Colombia, FARC dissidents and the ELN claim revolutionary liberation while taxing coca farmers earning \$0.50 per kilo of a product retailing at \$100 per gram — the armed struggle has become its own form of extraction, indistinguishable from the system it claims to oppose.

Across the bioregion, the same communities that bear the environmental cost of mining are losing their capacity to resist it: young people migrate to cities, traditional water management knowledge thins, and each year of glacial retreat makes the remaining water more valuable to extractors and less available to farmers.

Who Sustains This

Peruvian Mining-Security Complex *“We must protect investment and growth from anti-mining radicals”*

Developing communities through extraction that destroys their livelihoods. Peruvian mining promises development for the poorest regions but contaminates the water and land that sustain existing livelihoods.

State budget; police-mining company private contracts (convenios)

FARC Dissidents (Estado Mayor Central) *“We must continue the struggle against the oligarchic state”*

Claiming revolutionary liberation while operating as a narco-trafficking enterprise. The FARC dissidents invoke Bolivarian liberation ideology to justify territorial control, but their revenue depends entirely on the coca economy — which requires the poverty and state absence they claim to oppose.

Coca taxation in Cauca, Nariño, Putumayo; illegal gold mining; extortion of rural communities; cocaine trafficking

National Liberation Army *“We must resist the capitalist state and defend the people”*

Fighting extractive capitalism while funding the fight through extraction. The ELN's Marxist-Leninist ideology opposes multinational mining, yet the organisation funds itself by extorting the same mining operations and taxing coca production.

Extortion of mining and oil operations; coca taxation; kidnapping; illegal gold mining in Chocó and Antioquia

Glencore (Cerrejón Mine) *"We must provide the energy the world needs, responsibly"*

Claiming responsible mining while operating the largest open-pit coal mine in the world on stolen Wayúu land. Cerrejón has displaced over 2,000 Wayúu families, diverted the Ranchería River for mining operations in one of South America's driest regions, and generated dust storms that cause respiratory disease in children.

Coal exports (~35M tonnes/year); Colombian government royalties (~5% of coal value)

The glaciers are a covenant written in ice — millennia of water stored against the dry season, released each year to feed the terraces below. We are spending the covenant, and what we buy with it is copper for batteries and cocaine for cities that will never see the mountains bare.

For Prayer

Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope

For the displaced...

For the 7.1 million people displaced from their homes — especially in Colombia, where the crisis is most acute. This week in Colombia: Colombia is facing a complex, protracted, and rapidly intensifying humanitarian crisis driven by the escalation of internal armed conflict, rising levels of social violence, floods, and forced displacement.. For safety on the road and welcome at the journey's end.

For those living under violence...

For communities enduring armed conflict between Peruvian Mining-Security Complex and FARC Dissidents (Estado Mayor Central) across Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope — 755 killed in the past three months. This week in Ecuador: The rainy season continues to affect most of Ecuador, and as of 11 March it had caused 605 flood events and more than 580 landslides, leading to casualties and widespread damage.. For protection of civilians and for those who have lost loved ones.

For Colombia...

Especially for Colombia, facing the most severe convergence of crises in this region. This week in Colombia: Every single hour throughout 2025, the life of a student or teacher in Colombia was placed in jeopardy.. For those making impossible decisions about whether to stay or flee, and for those who cannot choose.

For those who serve...

For humanitarian workers and missionaries in Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope — for their safety, their courage, and their capacity to reach those most in need. This week in Ecuador: The humanitarian impact continues to rise as the 2026 rainy season intensifies across Ecuador. From 1 January to the present, the country has recorded 629 flood events and 612 landslides..

For seeds of hope...

For every act of resistance and care in Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope — communities sharing food, farmers saving seed, neighbours sheltering neighbours. That these small acts of defiance outlast the crisis.

Seeds of Hope

In the highlands above Las Bambas, Quechua communities have blockaded the copper transport road repeatedly since 2022 — not because they oppose development, but because the development on offer requires the destruction of the water systems they depend on. In Peru, seed laws aimed at corporate intellectual property are being contested by Indigenous communities preserving 3,000 potato varieties in community seed banks — a form of resistance that is simultaneously agricultural practice, cultural survival, and defiance of enclosure. In Bolivia, coca farmer federations have organised to keep traditional coca cultivation legal, maintaining a space between criminalisation and cartel control. In Ecuador, communities in flooded provinces are rebuilding without waiting for state response — the same self-organisation that has sustained Andean communities for millennia, now deployed against disasters that arrive faster than any government can respond.

Looking Ahead

The next 30 days bring deepening wet season across the Andes, meaning continued flooding risk in Ecuador (already 629 events) and Colombia, while the approaching dry season (June–September) will shift the pressure to water scarcity — particularly acute where mining operations compete with agriculture for diminishing glacial melt. Colombian elections may trigger armed group activity around territorial control of coca zones. The ENSO-neutral forecast offers no relief from baseline glacial retreat, which is structural and irreversible at current emission trajectories.

Psalm 23 (Trust — The Good Shepherd)

*The Lord is my shepherd;
therefore can I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.*

Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

As you read this briefing on Andean Highlands and Pacific Slope, consider:

- 1. How does your government's policy contribute to or mitigate this violence?*
- 2. What would you risk for peace if you lived there?*