



Protocol for development and updating of the database on massacres

Here we discuss two databases: one of massacres and the other of large massacres. The following persons participated in their development: Francisco Gutiérrez, Fabián Acunha, Margarita Marín and Ana María Almanza. The first defined the database. Fabián Acunha worked for a long time on it. Margarita Marín and Ana Almanza developed the final version, included important technical adjustments, and extensively double-checked the quality both of the data and of the sources.

Please quote as follows:

In Spanish: Gutiérrez, Francisco; Marín, Margarita; Almanza, Ana María; Acuña, Fabián. *Base de datos de masacres y grandes masacres* [en línea].
< <http://www.observatoriodetierras.org/2015/10/09/base-de-datos-masacres>>

In English: Gutiérrez, Francisco; Marín, Margarita; Almanza, Ana María; Acuña, Fabián. *Massacres and Big Massacres Database*. [online].
< <http://www.observatoriodetierras.org/2015/10/09/base-de-datos-masacres>>

This document explains the protocol implemented for the development and future updates of the database on massacres in Colombia.

1. Definition of a massacre

Massacres are defined as the murder of a plural number of persons, generally defenseless, produced by an armed attack or a similar cause¹. However, this general definition covers many different hues. For example, for Suárez², a massacre is an intentional collective homicide of persons protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and in defenseless conditions, in equal circumstances in terms of time, manner and place. Defensoría del Pueblo (People's Ombudsman Office) defines a massacre as a murder of more than four persons in a single event³, though it may also occur in several municipalities or locations of the same rural district, jurisdiction or even a department⁴.

According to the National Army, a massacre occurs when defenseless persons are intentionally murdered and three or more victims are the result of the event, in equal circumstances of time and place, produced by armed attacks or similar causes⁵.

For the effects of this protocol, the definition given by Defensoría del Pueblo shall be used.

2. Definition of victims

Victims of massacres are defined as defenseless persons, such as civilians and soldiers who are not participating in military activities or in the conflict. Persons who are not defenseless, such as those who are members of the groups involved in the conflict (guerrillas and paramilitaries, among others), militaries in combat or persons who are committing a crime, are not considered to be victims of massacres.

¹ Definition given by the Royal Spanish Academy

² Suárez, Andrés Fernando. 2007. Identidades políticas y exterminio recíproco. Masacres y guerra en Urabá, 1991-2001. Medellín: La Carretera. Taken from Báez, L. M. C., González, N. C., & Vargas, S. E. (2014). Metodologías en el estudio de la violencia sexual en el marco del conflicto armado colombiano. Colombia Internacional, (80), 19-56.

³ Defensoría del Pueblo (People's Ombudsman). Resolución defensorial Humanitaria (Humanitarian Ombudsman's Resolution) No. 005, of September 20, 2001. Available at: <http://www.defensoria.org.co/pdf/resoluciones/humanitaria/humanitaria5.pdf>.

⁴ Defensoría del Pueblo (People's Ombudsman) (2000), Luz para la vida. Masacres ocurridas en Colombia hasta 1999. Sistema de Alertas Tempranas (SAT), Bogotá

⁵ Taken from Báez, L. M. C., González, N. C., & Vargas, S. E. (2014). Metodologías en el estudio de la violencia sexual en el marco del conflicto armado colombiano. Colombia Internacional, (80), 19-56.



3. Thresholds

In the particular case of this database, only events in which the death of at least four persons is recorded are considered massacres. A large massacre is defined as one in which there are at least nine victims.

Please note that the database includes two columns for victims: one with the maximum number and the other with the minimum number.

Whenever the number of victims is uncertain or when the different sources of information report different numbers of victims, the lower number of the different reports is recorded in the column “*minimum number of victims*”, and the highest number reported is recorded in the column “*maximum number of victims*”. Thus, for example, if **El Tiempo** reports 10 victims and **Noche y Niebla** reports 9 victims, then 9 victims are recorded in the minimum number and 10 victims are recorded in the maximum number.

When disappearances occur along with the massacre, the number of disappeared persons is added to the number of victims, and is included in the column of maximum number of victims.

4. Publication Date

The publication date is defined as the date of publication of the article, magazine, testimonial, report, or other source of information. If it is not possible to identify the publication date, the date on which the information was collected is recorded.

The date is recorded in the format “dd/mm/yyyy”

5. Date of Occurrence

The date of occurrence is defined as the date on which the massacre was reported to have been perpetrated. In the event the massacre lasts several days, the start date of the event is recorded. If it is not possible to establish the date of occurrence, the publication date is recorded.

The date is recorded in the format “dd/mm/yyyy”

6. Year

This column records the year on which the massacre occurred

7. Decade

The decade on which the event is recorded, in the format “xx’s”

8. Cdane



The code of the department is recorded according to the coding system of the National Statistics Administration Department (DANE by its acronym in Spanish). If the department is not identified, the code -99 is entered.

9. Department

The name of the department where the event occurred is recorded. If none is identified, "NO RECORD" is input.

10. Cdanem

The code of the municipality is recorded according to the coding system of the National Statistics Administration Department (DANE by its acronym in Spanish). If the municipality is not identified, the code -9999 is entered.

11. Municipality

The name of the Municipality where the event took place is recorded. If it has not been identified "NO RECORD" is input.

12. Location

The specific location where the event took place is recorded, such as the name of the neighborhood, the farm, the business establishment, among others. If none is specified, it is left blank.

13. Vereda (Rural District)

The rural district where the event took place is recorded. If none is specified, it is left blank.

14. Corregimiento (Rural Jurisdiction)

The rural jurisdiction where the event took place is recorded. If none is specified, it is left blank.

15. Authors or perpetrators

The perpetrator is defined as the person responsible for the massacre. For the effects of this database, the following categories will be used:

- Army or Armed Forces: when those responsible belong to any branch of the armed forces
- Police –ESMAD: when those responsible belong to the national Police
- Guerrilla Groups: when those responsible belong to any of the guerrilla groups, such as Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), among others
- Paramilitary Groups: when those responsible belong to any paramilitary group, such as Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare (ACC), among others



- BACRIM: when those responsible belong to a post-demobilization paramilitary group or to criminal gangs, such as Águilas Negras, Los Rastrojos, Los Urabeños, among others.
- Militias, death squads, hit men: when those responsible belong to a group of hired assassins.
- Non-identified author: When it is not possible to identify the authors of the massacre.

If more than one group of perpetrators is identified, they should be recorded in the column of perpetrators.

16. Organization

Here the specific organization involved in the event is recorded. For example, if the event is perpetrated by FARC, FARC is recorded in this box. If the specific organization is unknown, it is left blank.

17. Block

The specific block involved in the event is recorded. If it does not apply or is not identified, it is left blank.

18. Front

The specific Front involved in the event is recorded. If it does not apply or is not identified, it is left blank.

19. Lower level

The lower level of the organization involved in the event is recorded. If it does not apply or is unknown, it is left blank.

20. Commander

The name or a.k.a. of the leader of the group involved in the event is recorded. If it does not apply or is unknown, it is left blank.

21. Comments

Any additional relevant information or clarifications are recorded

22. Facts

This box includes the full text of the report

23. Sources of information

The following are considered sources of information:

- Newspapers and magazines of national or regional circulation, such as El Tiempo, El Espectador, Semana, El País, El Colombiano, El Heraldo, El Universal, Vanguardia Liberal, among others.



- Website and communications from national journalism sources, such as RCN, Caracol, Blu, among others.
- Newspapers and magazines of international circulation, such as The New York Times, El Clarín, El País, among others.
- Testimonials from victims and demobilized actors, such as those available at Verdad Abierta, rulings of the judicial branch, testimonials from the Attorney General (Fiscalía), Defensoría del Pueblo (Ombudsman), among others.
- The publication Noche y Niebla and Rutas del Conflicto

The name of the source of interest is recorded

24. Detail

This box records the information required to find the original source of information, such as an internet link (in the event it is available on line) or the date and page of publication in the case of physical media.

Notwithstanding the above, the data gathering protocol requires maintaining on file copies of the documents.

Consequently, if the original document is on line, it must be printed out electronically (to a file in format .pdf, .xs, among others) or the news story may be photographed (format .jpg, .png among others). If there is a physical document, it should be photographed or scanned for filing. In both cases, it should be filed under the name of the department, name of the municipality and date of occurrence in the format ("Department Municipality _ddmmyy").

If the file contains more than one event, the file should be labeled with the name of the source and the dates ("Source_ddmmyy-ddmmyy").