

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia	via email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co Sr. Fabio Espitia Garzón Attorney General of Colombia
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November 26, 2019

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply disturbed by the killing of 18-year-old **Dilan Cruz**, who joined a demonstration in Bogotá on November 23, which was part of the nationwide strike that began on November 21. After suffering injuries from being struck on the head by a police tear gas canister, he died on November 25, on the day of his anticipated high school graduation.

The demonstrations were largely peaceful until nightfall when participants say that national riot police (ESMAD) began to fire rubber bullets, tear gas canisters, and stun grenades. A friend of Dilan gave the statement that "Dilan went to the front to kick back a tear-gas canister, because it had landed next to old people, [and] that's when he was shot at." Demonstrators in proximity to Dilan, who were recording footage of the attack, say he was struck by a tear gas canister. Dr. Juan Martínez at the hospital diagnosed a traumatic brain injury caused by a "penetrating object." On Monday evening, after briefly maintaining a critical medical state and induced coma, Dilan Cruz died.

As a young would-be high school graduate, Dilan was planning to study business administration and was therefore moved to join protest marches in the capital to highlight the difficulties faced by students in accessing higher education. While these demonstrations have largely been attended and organized by students, the nationwide strike on November 21 included Colombians identifying with trade unions, environmental organizations, civil society organizations, women's movements, Afro-Colombians, indigenous and rural women leaders, and many more representing minority and marginalized populations.

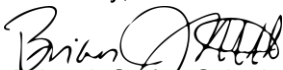
We are relieved to see that Dilan's death has been met with commemoration and honor not only by those who are continuing the movement in the streets of Bogotá, Medellín, Cauca, and beyond, but also by government officials, whose work is actively being criticized by the protest movement. These voices within the government include Police Chief Óscar Atehortúa (who noted that the police officer involved in the incident has been suspended and is under investigation), mayor-elect of Bogotá Claudia López, and current mayor Enrique Peñalosa. We were glad to learn that you, President Duque, planned to meet with protesters today, for the first time since the demonstrations began.

We commend these elected officials for publicly acknowledging the killing of Dilan Cruz, but we also condemn your government for dispatching ESMAD forces to peaceful demonstrations. By militarizing sites of protest, the government has created an environment ripe for state repression and disproportionate use of force by security forces. Hundreds of demonstrators and more than 340 police officers have been injured in these recent protests. We denounce the violent response from the state and completely and affirm that protest and the right to strike have been and remain core human rights that are foundational to building and maintaining democracy. Dilan Cruz is at least the twenty-first fatal victim at the hands of ESMAD since it was created in 1999 as a unit unauthorized to use lethal force.

We strongly urge you to:

- continue a thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Dilan Cruz, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- continue to meet with movement leaders to explore the future of this peace process with respect and recognition for their calls for creating positive social change in Colombia

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643 and email
 Rebecca Daley, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy in Colombia ~ via email
 Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Dept ~ via email
 Francisco José Eguiguren Praeli, Rapporteur for Colombia and Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email
 Justice for Colombia ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
 US Representatives Beatty, Fudge, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: