

via email: contacto@presidencia.gov.co**Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez**
President of the Republic of Colombiavia email: despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co**Sr. Fiscal General Néstor Humberto Martínez Neira**
Attorney General of Colombia

March 23, 2020

Dear Sirs,

We are deeply disturbed to learn that the Colombian Armed Forces used indiscriminate gunfire against inmates at La Modelo prison in Bogotá on March 22. The use of deadly force resulted in 23 deaths and 90 wounded.

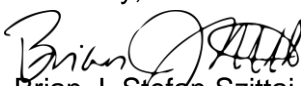
La Modelo inmates joined with prisoners across the country who were holding simultaneous protests against unhealthy conditions, overcrowding, and lack of protections against the COVID-19 coronavirus. La Modelo, listed as one of the world's worst and most dangerous prisons, has a rate of overcrowding of over 50%, with prisoners often having to sleep in shifts because of lack of space. Because of unsanitary conditions and systemic overcrowding, implementing strategies to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus—such as social distancing or good hygiene—simply are not possible.

Colombian courts have declared the lack of health and overcrowding illegal and in violation of the constitution. Immediate measures must be taken to alleviate overcrowding and improve sanitation and health in the prison system.

We **strongly urge** that you

- investigate the massacre at La Modelo and punish those who ordered the use of deadly force
- isolate and provide necessary medical care to inmates currently infected (or those potentially infected) with the COVID-19 virus
- divert inmates charged with nonviolent crimes who are being held in remand (*prisión preventiva*) to non-prison supervision, such as house arrest (since inmates in *prisión preventiva* are approximately 33% of incarcerated persons in Colombia)
- expedite the issuance of parole or house arrest for inmates currently serving their criminal sentences
- provide alternative measures to imprisonment to inmates over the age of 65 and those with vulnerable health conditions, both for those held in remand and those currently serving their criminal sentences
- release inmates imprisoned for minor, nonviolent crimes, and those with sentences of less than eight years.
- release the more than 300 political prisoners and prisoners of war who should have been released under provisions of the 2016 Peace Accords

Sincerely,



Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator



Christine Stonebraker-Martínez

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
Antonia Urrejoa, Rapporteur for Colombia and Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
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: