

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sr. Fiscal General Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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May 13, 2021

Dear Sirs:


We are horrified at the level of **state-sponsored violence against popular demonstrations** across the country. For the past two weeks, the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) and police have responded with indiscriminate violence, resulting in multiple injuries and deaths. When police in Cali (Valle del Cauca Department) opened fire on demonstrators on April 28, 17-year-old **Marcelo Agredo** was shot in the head and killed. As of May 5, human rights organizations in Colombia reported at least 37 people killed, 1708 reports of police brutality, more than 800 arbitrary detentions and 10 victims of sexual abuse perpetrated by the police. As of May 11, the office of the Colombian human rights ombudsman has received reports of at least 41 civilians and one police officer killed.

The national strike called by civil society organizations turned out tens of thousands into the streets starting April 28. Although prompted by the proposed tax hike (since rescinded by your government), the presence of public demonstrations in at least half the municipalities throughout the nation indicates that a majority of Colombia's people have lost their tolerance for extreme social inequality and rampant corruption. Demonstrators draw a link between the current protests and the massive demonstrations in November 2019 over a host of issues: earlier tax increases, assassinations of social leaders, official corruption, inequality, and weak implementation of the November 2016 Peace Accords. More people have become more desperate and dissatisfied during the coronavirus epidemic. According to your government's statistics, poverty jumped to 43% and unemployment to 17% as of March.

We **strongly urge** that you

- withdraw all military personnel from the streets because soldiers are trained for armed conflict, not for public safety
- investigate all reports of violence against demonstrators by security personnel and address any violation of human rights
- continue official talks with the National Strike Committee, which represents various groups including indigenous people, unions, environmentalists and students, to discuss key demands
- stop stigmatizing protesters and suggesting that they are linked to armed rebel groups
- guarantee the rights of peaceful assembly and to protest

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinators


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
IACHR: Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email, US mail
UN: Juliette De Rivero, Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
US Embassy: Kristen Farrell (human rights) and Mariel Chatman (vulnerable populations) ~ via email
US State Department: Christine Russell, Desk Officer for Colombia ~ via email
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email
US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, Gonzalez, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

07 MAY 2021_WIP_Colombia

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