

<p><b>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez</b> President of the Republic of Colombia <a href="mailto:contacto@presidencia.gov.co">contacto@presidencia.gov.co</a></p>	<p><b>Sr. Fiscal General Francisco Barbosa Delgado</b> Attorney General of Colombia <a href="mailto:despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co">despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</a></p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

June 25, 2021

Dear Sirs:

We are horrified at the level of **state-sponsored violence against popular demonstrations** across the country. For the past several weeks, the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) and police have responded with indiscriminate violence, resulting in multiple injuries and deaths.

On June 21, the Usme neighborhood of south Bogotá saw particularly high levels of aggression by ESMAD, which repeatedly attacked demonstrators, killing one person, injuring at least 42 and arresting many more. **Jaime Alonso Fandiño**, age 33, was killed after an ESMAD agent shot him in the chest with a high-powered projectile from close range. Media reports said that ESMAD agents also attacked medical teams and journalists, while threatening at least two human rights observers.


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 Although prompted by the proposed tax hike (since rescinded by your government), the presence of public demonstrations in at least half the municipalities throughout the nation indicates that a majority of Colombia's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.

As of June 16, human rights organizations in Colombia have reported at least 43 people killed, 1,468 reports of police brutality, more than 800 arbitrary detentions, 70 cases of eye injuries, 28 cases of sexual violence, and 1,832 arbitrary detentions.

We **strongly urge** that you

- withdraw all ESMAD and 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 (CPN), 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-Coordinator

  
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

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