

<p>Excmo. Sr. Presidente Iván Duque Márquez President of the Republic of Colombia contacto@presidencia.gov.co</p>	<p>Sr. Fiscal Francisco Barbosa Delgado Attorney General of Colombia despacho.fiscal@fiscalia.gov.co</p>
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January 11, 2022

Dear Sirs:

We are deeply concerned about the use of **brutal repression by the National Police and its Anti-Riot Mobile Squad (ESMAD)** against your citizens who are protesting against fare increases in Bogota's TransMilenio transport system. In December, TransMilenio announced that the public transportation fare would rise from US\$0.37 to US\$0.64 (an increase of 150 pesos colombianos) as of today. Lower-income workers, who will be most negatively impacted, began organizing last week to express their outrage.


In the evening hours of January 5, just hours after Mayor Claudia Lopez rejected a proposal by Defense Minister Diego Molano to militarize some areas of Bogota, ESMAD agents arrived with two military tanks at the Molinos neighborhood of Bogotá. They threw stun grenades at demonstrators and fired tear gas indiscriminately. ESMAD detained a young journalist and kicked him. Officers also apprehended a young woman; as of January 6, her whereabouts were still unknown.

As protests multiplied today, in neighborhoods like Usme and Kennedy, as many as 2,500 police and ESMAD agents were deployed to public transportation stops. Demonstrators held signs like "Bread or Bus Ticket?" It is reported that many demonstrators have been arrested.

We urge that you:

- conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into the excessive force used by the National Police and ESMAD on January 5 and hold to accountability any officers who inflicted violent harm on protesters
- remove ESMAD from the points of public protest around the city
- respect the right of your citizens to assemble and demonstrate without fear of harm or arrest

Sincerely,


Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Co-Coordinator


Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Francisco Santos Calderón, Ambassador of Colombia to the US ~ via email, US mail
Daniel Palacios, Minister of the Interior ~ via email
Joel Hernández García, 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, Brown, 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: