

International Civil Society Organizations Call for Respect for Peaceful Protest in Colombia, Dialogue

May 7, 2021

As human rights, faith, labor, environmental, Colombian-American, and other organizations concerned with human rights and peace in Colombia, we denounce the brutal repression of protest in Colombia over the last several days. Since the protests began, there have been an alarming number of deaths caused by police violence, wounding of protesters and police, sexual assaults, arbitrary detentions, and disappearances of demonstrators, as well as attacks against human rights defenders providing monitoring and verification. We call for respect for the right to peaceful protest and the right to defend human rights. We call for de-escalation and dialogue and for protesters to use peaceful means to express their demands. We urge the Duque Administration to immediately withdraw the military from crowd control in both urban and rural areas, to ensure the police respect human rights, and to act quickly and impartially to suspend, investigate and prosecute all security force members who have committed gross human rights violations. We further urge the Duque Administration to refrain from issuing a state of emergency or other measures that could increase repression and suspend rights and human rights protections.

Serious issues long ignored underlie these protests, including economic and racial injustice and exclusion, the government's inadequate and unequal response to the pandemic, the abject failure to fully implement Colombia's historic peace accords, the government's controversial plan to reinstate aerial spraying while failing to provide alternatives to farmers, and the nonstop slaughter of human rights defenders and social leaders. In addition, police and military forces need systemic reform, including to ensure adherence to the UN basic principles of use of force.

We call on the national Ombudsman's Office and the Inspector General's Office to vigorously carry out their constitutional duties to protect the citizenry and call on all relevant government agencies to immediately locate the disappeared. We urge the Colombian government to engage in respectful and meaningful dialogue with sectors of Colombian society whose needs and demands have been too long unheard, dismissed, and unmet.

We call for an in-country visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to document the situation and the creation of an independent expert mechanism to support the investigation and prosecution of gross human rights violations committed during the protests and to propose recommendations to ensure these violations are not repeated.

Finally, we urge the United States government and the international community at large to demand an end to human rights violations by Colombia's security forces, to suspend security aid to abusive forces, and to call for dialogue.

Signatories:

AFL-CIO
Alianza Americas
Amazon Watch
Americans for Indian Opportunity
Amnesty International
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL)
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America-CRLN
Church World Service
CIVICUS
Colombia Human Rights Committee
EarthRights International
Global Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
International institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
NISGUA
Oxfam America
Presbyterian Church (USA) /Latin America & Caribbean area
Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Solidarity Center
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective