

International Feminist Solidarity in the Face of Escalating State Violence Against Social Protests in Colombia

The Urgent Action Fund for Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the 47 signatory organizations, manifest our concern about the escalating violence perpetrated by the Colombian state against its population in recent weeks. We bring this urgent alert before the international community to promote expressions of solidarity with the Colombian people who have been demonstrating since April 28th, in the context of the National Strike.

The social movements' legitimate demands have been met by increased criminal proceedings against protesters, militarization, and unprecedented state repression, with a disproportionate and illegitimate use of force against citizen protesters, once again demonstrating systematic state terrorism. As of today, May 21st, diverse civil society organizations¹ have reported alarming numbers, with 52 individuals killed, 43 of which resulted from police violence, 89 enforced disappearances, and over 700 injured.

Additionally, there are at least 2,387 cases of violence perpetrated by state forces; 384 victims of physical violence, 1,645 arbitrary detentions of demonstrators, 472 violent interventions in the context of peaceful protests, 41 victims of eye injuries, 146 incidents when firearms were used, and 87 victims of gender-based violence.

The violence perpetrated by police forces has even reached the point where multiple attacks have been registered against medical teams and human rights observers, in addition to the harassment against public employees who support the strike. In cities such as Cali, Buga, and Bogotá the police have directly attacked homes with firearms and even explosives, resulting in numerous people injured, including minors and older adults.

We denounce the structural racism, which has been exacerbated by state and private actors during the Strike. On May 9th, the Bogotá headquarters of the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC - Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca) was targeted with racist messages. That same afternoon the Indigenous Minga –which was traveling to Cali in solidarity with the protests– was attacked by civilians with firearms who were protected by the police, resulting in 12 injured, four of which had

¹ Boletín informativo 14: Paro Nacional - <https://defenderlalibertad.com/boletin-informativo-14-paronacional/> Plataforma GRITA <https://www.temblores.org/grita> de la ONG Temblores <https://www.temblores.org/>



serious injuries. This context was aggravated by the racist statements made by some media outlets and government officials against the Minga.

We also want to alert to the censorship of social media, especially Facebook and Instagram, for content related to the National Strike, mainly posts that demonstrate police violence. Also, there have been sporadic cuts to electricity and cellphone and internet signals in areas where the police have been deployed.

It should be noted that the aforementioned situation is occurring amid a context of simultaneous crises throughout the country. This intensifies all forms of violence, but there are specific manifestations against the most vulnerable groups: women, LGBT*IQ+ and young people and indigenous, campesinas, and Afro-descendant communities.

The National Strike, convened by multiple sectors of civil society, continues with protests in 500 municipalities throughout the country and another 40 cities around the world that have Colombian migrants. The explosion of protests originated in response to a regressive tax reform, which is currently being (re)evaluated by the national government. Nevertheless, the Colombian people's indignation is closely tied to the country's structural inequalities, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the government's non-fulfillment of the Peace Agreement signed with the FARC guerrillas.

On the other hand, the protests and demonstrations also reflect the indignation arising from the systematic murder of Human Rights Defenders who work to build peace from the territories, against the privatization of public utilities, the concessions and environmental licenses granted to extractive companies, the militarization of the national territory, the increase in gender-based violence and feminicides during the quarantine, and the government refusal to provide a basic income to families during the crisis. Today, Colombia is the country with the highest levels of violence against human rights defenders in the world, with 65 human rights defenders and 23 signatories of the peace agreement murdered so far in 2021.²

Due to the prior, we request that the international community:

- Urge the Colombian state to:

^{2 2} Líderes sociales, defensorxs de DDHH y firmantes de acuerdo asesinados en 2021:

<http://www.indepaz.org.co/lideres-sociales-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-asesinados-en-2021/>



- Effectively guarantee the right to social protests, immediately suspend all attacks against demonstrators, and citizens in general, and investigate and punish all human rights violations committed in the current context.
- Open truly inclusive dialogue spaces, take on commitments and concrete actions that reflect the diversity of proposals and demands from the organized civil society, ensure a dialogued solution to the crisis and immediately reform the armed forces and police.
- Help to break the media blackout by supporting dissemination and making visible the voices of individuals and organizations in the regions, using verified information to avoid the spread of fake news and the increase of fear among the population.
- Echo demands, activating all possible manifestations of solidarity with the Colombian people.

We recommend that the philanthropic community:

- Send communications and requests to your embassies in Colombia, urging them to make statements.
- Review your procedures and practices, especially for crisis contexts, to reduce the burden that could be experienced by the organizations.
- Directly support organizations in an agile and flexible manner so that they can respond to the context through advocacy, mobilization, denouncements, legal advice, communications, protection, security, and collective care in physical, digital, emotional, and spiritual aspects. We want to highlight the need to support strategies for psycho-social and emotional support, healing, and care, understood holistically, that allow the organizations, activists, and those who accompany them, to address the physical and emotional toll and increase the sustainability of their actions.
- Include in your financing strategies the diversity of movements and subjects who are active in this context and not only traditional or formally constituted organizations.
- Coordinate and work in coordination to avoid duplicating support and generate joint strategies to respond to this context.
- Avoid increasing the risks faced by organizations that are involved or participating in the protests by using safe communication channels with activists and allies.

We hold up the strength, creativity, and diversity of the Colombian social movements that stand strong in the face of overarching adversity and continue their fight for a deep-seated transformation of their country. We honor the memory of those who are no longer with us and we embrace those who search for their loved ones each day, as well as those people who are healing their wounds and demanding justice. We continue to listen and act in solidarity.

Signatory organizations:

Urgent Action Fund Latin America and the Caribbean

Women's Fund Armenia

Women's Rights Advocate

Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights

Urgent Action Fund Asia & Pacific

Urgent Action Fund Africa



TEWA
 REDMYH AC
 Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe – RSMLAC
 Observatorio de Equidad de Género en Salud
 Organizando Trans Diversidades (Asociación OTD Chile)
 Nien co terapias LGTBQI+
 Mama Cash
 Mediterranean Women's Fund
 Mesa Accion por el Aborto Chile
 Libres Diversas
 Inmujeres
 Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos
 Human Rights Funders Network
 GAFPA (Grupo de Autoformación Feminista Prudencia Ayala)
 Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
 Fiji Women's Fund
 Fondo Alquimia
 Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres
 Fondo de Mujeres Bolivia Apathapi Jopueti
 Fondo de Mujeres del Sur
 Fondo Semillas
 Fundación Akáinix
 Fundación Plurales
 Elvira Liceaga
 Doria Feminist Fund
 Calala Fondo de Mujeres
 Casa Caracola
 Cinema Queer México
 Colectivo CASA
 Comunidades SETAA Sembradoras de Territorios, Aguas y Autonomías afectadas por Hidroituango
 CONAMURI
 Consorcio para el Dialògo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca A.C.
 Coordinadora de la Mujer
 Corriente Clasista de Trabajadoras
 Cuirpoétikas
 A. E. Lynch Consulting LLC
 Agrupación Lésbica Visibles
 Amazon Watch
 Articulação Nacional de Psicólogas(os) Negras(os) e Pesquisadoras(es)
 Asamblea Territorial Elisa Correa Independiente
 Asociadas por lo Justo JASS Mesoamérica
 Association for Women's Rights in Development

