



Press Release

Brussels, 25 Mayo 2017. The Catalan Roundtable for Peace and Human Rights in Colombia (*Taula Catalana*) and the International Office on Human Rights – Action Colombia (OIDHACO) are concerned about reports of violence used against demonstrators and other human rights violations by the Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) during the civic strike in Buenaventura and about threats and other violent actions by paramilitary groups¹. We also reiterate our concern about threats, attacks and murders against social leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia and call for guarantees for their security.

On May 19, after three days of peaceful demonstrations organised by 83 social organisations in the port city of Buenaventura, a series of repressive actions were carried out by ESMAD and some members of the Colombian Police².

These events gave rise to further disturbances in the city. After a week of protests, 80 people have been arrested³ and 11 injured⁴.

The Taula Catalana and Oidhaco have also received information about threats and attacks carried out during the past week against the participants in the civic strike in Buenaventura⁵ and against the peasant movement in different parts of Colombia⁶. On 14 May, trade union leader Mario Andrés Calle Correa was assassinated in the municipality of Guacarí, Valle del Cauca. Mr Calle Correa was president of the Association of Peasant Workers in Valle del Cauca - Guacarí Office (*Asociación de Trabajadores Campesino del Valle del Cauca – Subdirectiva Guacarí*) and member of the *Marcha Patriótica* Social and Political Movement⁷. On 18 May, two unknown people shot and killed trade union leader and politician Álvaro Arturo Tenorio Cabezas in the town of Magüi Payán, Nariño. Arturo Tenorio was part of the *Marcha Patriótica* Political and Social Movement in Nariño and a member of other small-scale farming movements⁸.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, has reported that between January and May 2017, at least 41 activists have been killed in Colombia. This represents an increase compared to the same period in 2016⁹.

These cases are one example of the serious obstacles that some sectors of society face in Colombia when exercising their rights to freedom of expression and protest. In view of the above,

1 Contagio Radio. [Pescadores de Buenaventura son amenazados por paramilitares](#). 19 May 2017

2 Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz. [Con uso desproporcionado de la fuerza el Estado responde al Paro Cívico](#). 20 May 2017

3 Contagio Radio. [Buenaventura sigue en paro pese a represión, militarización y toque de queda](#). 20 May 2017

4 Noticias RCN. [Disturbios en Buenaventura dejan un muerto, 11 heridos y 80 detenidos](#). 20 May 2017

5 Contagio Radio. [Pescadores de Buenaventura que están en paro cívico son amenazados por paramilitares](#). 19 May 2017

6 Pacifista. [Estos son los 35 líderes sociales asesinados desde el inicio de la implementación](#). **Fecha errónea.**

7 El Tiempo. [Asesinan a líder campesino en zona rural de Guacarí](#). 15 May 2017

8 Pacifista. [Asesinan de 10 disparos a dirigente campesino en Nariño](#). 19 May 2017

9 El Tiempo. [Onu entrega informe sobre 14 defensores de DD. HH. asesinados en 2017](#). 1 May 2017

10 Amnesty International : <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr23/6325/2017/en/> 24 May 2017



Oidhaco and the Taula reiterate our concern regarding the multiple cases of human rights violations and urge the Colombian authorities to:

- Investigate the abuses reportedly committed by the different bodies of the state security forces during the protests and impose disciplinary and penal sanctions on those responsible.
- Guarantee the right to freedom of expression and make public statements recognising the legitimacy of these demonstrations and the work of social movements and their leaders.
- Implement public policies and the necessary reforms to the state security forces to prevent these kinds of violations in the future. In particular work together with civil society organisations to develop a protocol that regulates the actions of the state security forces during social protest.
- Investigate attacks on social leaders, trade unionists, opposition leaders and human rights defenders within the current context, bring to trial those who planned and carried out the crimes and impose effective sanctions.
- Guarantee security and protection, including as provided for in the Peace Agreement in point 2 and point 3, which foresee the creation of a National Security Commission, a Special Investigation Unit in the Attorney General's Office and other measures to combat paramilitarism.