

## Public statement

Brussels, April 25th, 2019

### **The International Office for Human Rights – Action Colombia asks for guarantees respect for protesters rights during the National Strike**

Today, 25th April, a National Strike will begin in Colombia, called for by various social sectors, to denounce the failure to implement the commitments agreed upon by the Colombian government in roundtables following previous protests, and that have not been included in the Government's National Development Plan (PND). Additionally, the Strike calls upon the Colombian government to fully implement the Peace Agreement with the Farc-Ep.

Organizations have denounced the lack of budget or reduced budgets in the PND to implement the different points of the Agreement, e.g. the PDET<sup>i</sup>, the bodies of the Comprehensive System for Justice, Truth, Reparation and Non-Repetition, the ethnic chapter and the gender approach<sup>ii</sup>. The Kroc Institute, responsible for technical verification and monitoring of the implementation of the Agreement, disclosed in its third report published in April 2019, that 65% of commitments made in the Agreement have not been implemented or the progress has been minimal. <sup>iii</sup>

Organizations also denounce the serious situation of insecurity, especially in rural areas, as is evident by the killings, displacements, disappearances, criminalization and threats against human rights defenders and social leaders. The recently published report by the We Are Defenders Programme exposes an increase of 46 % with regard to the killing of human rights defenders: the number increased from 106 killings in 2017 to 155 in 2018. The state response has been insufficient: only 8.8 % of cases have been resolved, according to the Programme, and protection measures that are adopted do not tackle the structural causes of risk. <sup>iv</sup> To denounce this situation, in Bogotá, a *Humanitarian Shelter for Life of Social Leaders* will be set up .

The National Strike comes in the wake of a series of protests across Colombia over the last two years, such as student protests in 2018 and the National Minga for the Defence of Life, Territory and Peace, that took place in March and April of this year.

Protests in Colombia have been characterized by high rates of violent incidents committed against protesters by Public Security Forces: arbitrary detentions, persons killed or wounded by fire arms, disappeared and indiscriminate attacks against civilians<sup>v</sup>, disproportionately affecting peasants, indigenous and afrodescendant communities taking part in protests in rural areas<sup>vi</sup>. During last month's Minga, indigenous organizations denounced the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by members of the Public Security Forces and the militarisation of the areas where the protests took place, the death of one person from gunshots fired by the police<sup>vii</sup>, arbitrary detentions<sup>viii</sup>, death



threats<sup>ix</sup>, attacks against properties of the civilian population<sup>x</sup> and instances of stigmatisation by representatives of the Colombian government and civil servants.

Taking into account the real risk that these kinds of incidents and human rights violations may be repeated, Oidhaco insists that the Colombian government guarantees the right to freedom of peaceful protest, expression and association as established in the Resolution 119 of 2018 by the Ministry of Interior and according to international standards.

We therefore call on the International community to urge the Colombian Government to:

- Recognise in its public declarations the right of Colombian citizens to take part in peaceful protest activities against government policies as a legitimate means of political participation in a country in transition to peace
- Address the social and political issues and demands of the sectors who convened the protests through dialogue and not through violent means or unlawful use of the justice system
- Advance in the implementation of the protocol that regulates the behaviour of Public Security forces in social protests
- Reactivate and initiate dialogue with social organizations through the National Roundtable for Guarantees
- Investigate and bring to justice state agents and other persons responsible for abuse and violence during protests
- Refrain from making declarations that may defame or discredit social mobilization and from making groundless accusations that may put persons participating in the protests at risk

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<sup>i</sup> CCEEU. [Llamado de Alerta: la paz de Colombia en riesgo](#). 8 de abril 2019

<sup>ii</sup> El Espectador. [Desfinanciación de la paz, visión militarista y menos reparación en el plan nacional de desarrollo](#). 11 de febrero 2019

<sup>iii</sup> El Espectador. [El ritmo de implementación del Acuerdo de Paz disminuyó en los últimos meses: instituto Kroc](#). 9 de abril 2019

<sup>iv</sup> Programa Somos Defensores. [La naranja mecánica](#): Informe Anual 2018. Abril 2019

<sup>v</sup> Colombia Informa: [Informe del Paro Nacional Agrario a sus 22 días](#). 11 de septiembre de 2013

<sup>vi</sup> Cinep. Ibidem, 2014. Datos de Luchas Sociales del CINEP registró 171 luchas a lo largo del año [2013], sus participantes fueron: campesinos en el 42% de estas luchas; pobladores de frontera urbano-rural en el 32%; indígenas en el 14%; población rural desplazada por causa del conflicto armado en el 7% y, finalmente, afrocolombianos en el 5% de estas luchas.

<sup>vii</sup> Las dos orillas. [Los muertos de la Minga](#). 2 de abril 2019

<sup>viii</sup> Cumbre Agraria. [Comunicado a la opinión pública de la Minga por la defensa de la vida, el territorio, la democracia, la justicia y la paz](#). 21 de marzo 2019

<sup>ix</sup> FIDH. [Colombia: Asesinato del Sr. Aquileo Mecheche Baragón y nuevos ataques a la Minga](#). 16 de abril 2019.

<sup>x</sup> Cumbre Agraria. [Comunicado a la opinión pública de la Minga por la defensa de la vida, el territorio, la democracia, la justicia y la paz](#). 21 de marzo 2019

