



June 17th, 2021

President of the Republic of Colombia,
Iván Duque Márquez
Presidency of the Republic of Colombia
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We are addressing you with concern about the current risks for defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples, afrodescendant communities, small-scale farmers, students, young people and women, especially in regions historically affected by the internal armed conflict, such as the department of Cauca.

In its Resolution of 29 April 2021¹, the European Parliament reaffirmed its accompaniment and support for the full implementation of the Peace Agreement, as well as its interest in the human rights situation in Colombia. In particular, the European Parliament expressed concern at the situation of violence in the country, in the regions and in particular in the department of Cauca. The Resolution referred to cases of forced recruitment, sexual violence against women and girls, killings, torture and other atrocities, and attacks on ethnic communities and authorities. The Parliament also expressed concern about attacks against human rights defenders, former FARC combatants, and social and indigenous leaders.

We, the undersigned, would like to highlight the fundamental work carried out for 50 years by the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), defending the lives, territories and human rights of the indigenous and ancestral communities of Cauca and Colombia, and creating unity and synergies between different Colombian social movements in defence of human rights and peace. For us, it is important to highlight the work of this organisation, promoting and strengthening leadership for women and young people through its different programs, crucial to guaranteeing the political participation of indigenous peoples and indigenous women.

¹ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0160_EN.html



Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities, their leaders and their traditional authorities are key actors for the implementation of the Peace Agreement in Colombian regions. The ethnic approach in the Agreement must be implemented in order to guarantee reparation and non-repetition for these communities, who are among the main victims of the armed conflict and of the violence that still persists in their territories. We are concerned that, according to the Kroc Institute², only 10% of the 80 provisions in the ethnic matrix have been fully implemented and that at the same time, the territories of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have been heavily militarized. The ethnic matrix allows for a quantitative analysis of the extent to which the ethnic approach of the Peace Agreement has been implemented. We have also learned of attacks, murders of ethnic authorities and acts of stigmatization and racism against members of the CRIC and their expressions of mobilization and protest, such as the indigenous *Minga*³. We condemn any action that could put them at risk. We call on the government to provide protection guarantees for the work of the CRIC defending life, peace, territory and democracy, and to resume dialogue between all the parties involved in the National Strike, in order to achieve structural changes that favour the process towards a true and lasting peace.

We know that since April 28, a National Strike has been underway and is still continuing throughout the country to date. We have learned that despite the fact that most of the social protests have been peaceful, the repression of these protests, particularly in Cali, has been excessive and disproportionate, causing serious and persistent human rights violations. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has received information about armed individuals, including an off-duty judicial police officer, who allegedly fired in the direction of protesters, journalists covering the protests and passers-by⁴. We are concerned about the scale of the violence that is being used to suppress the National Strike, resulting in people being killed and injured, women suffering gender-based violence, and people being detained and disappeared⁵.

We are very concerned about the opening of investigations by the Attorney General against senator Wilson Arias, Alexander Lopez and Angela Maria Robledo and the members of the Congress Maria Jose Pizarro and Inti Asprilla. As members of the Congress and civil servants, they defended protester from arbitrary detention and denounced violation of human rights during mass demonstrations in Colombia since April 28. We express our solidarity with them and condemn any politically persecution against them.

² See <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/210310-Final-English-Ethnic-Report.pdf>

³ See <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-onic-reporta-al-menos-ocho-indigenas-heridos-por-balas-en-cali/202137/> and <https://www.eltiempo.com/politica/gobierno/el-trino-de-la-vice-marta-lucia-ramirez-sobre-la-minga-indigena-587380>

⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27128&LangID=E>

⁵ See <https://defenderlalibertad.com/boletin-informativo-15-paronacional/>



For the signatories of this letter, it is important to emphasize that the deployment of military forces to repress protest and the disproportionate and illegitimate use of force against demonstrators also affects the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the exercise of democracy.

We call upon the Colombian government to provide security guarantees to the entire population so that they can exercise their fundamental right to protest. We urge the Colombian State to increase and guarantee the protection and safety of all social and political leaders, social activists and defenders of the environment and rural communities. We also call for criminal and disciplinary investigations to be initiated into the reported human rights violations, for the investigations to be carried out with due diligence, seriousness and speed, guaranteeing the participation of victims. We urge the State to issue up-to-date, transparent public data on these procedures, the status of investigations, the criminal and disciplinary charges brought, and measures to ensure non-repetition.

We thank you in advance for your attention and wish your government every success in meeting national and international expectations for truly lasting and sustainable peacebuilding.

Kind regards,

Members of the European Parliament:

Jordi Solé (Greens/EFA)

François Alfonsi (Greens/EFA)

Manon Aubry (The Left)

Pernando Barrena (The Left)

Benoit Biteau (Greens/EFA)

Malin Björk (The Left)

Anna Cavazzini (Greens/EFA)

Leïla Chaïbi (The Left)

Ignazio Corrao (Greens/EFA)

Clare Daly (The Left)

Rosa D'Amato (Greens/EFA)

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Ibán García del Blanco (S&D)

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Erik Marquardt (Greens/EFA)

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Dimitrios Papadimoulis (The Left)

Piernicola Pedicini (Greens/EFA)

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