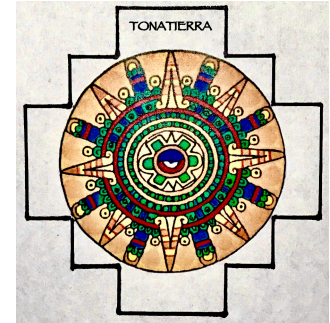


May 31, 2021

Congressional Progressive Caucus  
Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Chair  
Senator Bernie Sanders  
2346 Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC 20515

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission  
House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
5100 O'Neill House Office Building  
200 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20515  
TLHRC@mail.house.gov

António Guterres  
United Nations Secretary General /  
Alice Wairimu Nderitu  
Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention  
United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention  
and the Responsibility to Protect  
osapg@un.org



**Re: *Early Warning: Urgent Call to United States Congress and International Authorities for Immediate Response to Ongoing State Human Rights Violations and for the Prevention of Acts of Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, with Particular Danger to Indigenous Peoples and Organizations in the Context of the National Strike in Colombia***

For over a month since the beginning of the national strike in Colombia—with ongoing civilian protests for peace, the right to a dignified life, and basic social, political and economic rights that has garnered the participation of over 15 million people—the international human rights community has observed from afar the inhumane and brutal state repression of fundamental human rights by Colombia’s armed forces, police, and anti-riot (ESMAD) forces.

As human rights organizations based in the United States, we write to denounce the increasing state violence under President Duque’s authoritarian regime and issue an *early warning* to prevent a massacre of the Colombian people and, in particular, of Indigenous Peoples and organizations such as the *Guardia Indígena* (Indigenous Guard), the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (CRIC, Regional Council of Cauca), and *Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia* (ONIC, National Indigenous Organization of Colombia), which are in immediate risk of violence in the impending hours. They have already faced deliberate, concentrated threats, attacks, as a result of hate speech intended to stigmatize the protest of the Indigenous movement by branding them “terrorists,” thereby increasing the risk of physical and armed attacks against them.

In the early hours of May 30, 2021, we received various messages of distress from Indigenous leaders in the aforementioned communities. One message read (original in Spanish):

*“Our situation in Colombia has become very difficult, even members of government have declared us Indigenous peoples to be “terrorists” because of our participation in the national strike. This declaration puts our lives at risk, along with the physical integrity of each of us, our families, our communities, and territories. This also endangers the civil population of Colombia through a law of repression that seeks to silence the voices of the national strike and the minga in Colombia... we feel a national massacre is on the way.”*

The CRIC and ONIC issued statements and a list of demands to the Colombian government which include demands, among others, that the Colombian government: 1) respect human rights and the right to life, 2) offer guarantees for the fundamental civil rights to assemble and protest, 3) the return of disappeared to their families, and 4) further request international monitoring and investigation into crimes being carried out by armed forces and police. **We reiterate those demands and incorporate them herein.**

In addition, pursuant to the Leahy Laws, which prohibit the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense from providing military assistance to foreign security force units that violate human rights with impunity, **we ask that Congress immediately cease providing any additional support for the Colombian government** via military and police aid, as well as any other funding or continued trade with Colombia.

As one of the United States’ key trading partners in the Americas, Colombia is also the largest recipient of military and police aid. In 2021, over \$300 million was requested in military aid. Accordingly, the United States is complicit in the ongoing violence as it is facilitating the militarization of the country and the Colombian government’s repression of mass protests. In the last month alone, over 50 people have been killed, hundreds injured, tortured, disappeared, and targeted for sexual violence.

In the preface to the United Nations preface to *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*, Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated: “States have the primary responsibility for protecting their own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The international community has committed to support each State in this endeavour and, should States manifestly fail in meeting their responsibilities, to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner in line with the United Nations Charter.” Colombia is an aggressor against its own people enabled by United States funding.

The current state of generalized repression in Colombia is an imminent threat to compliance with the country's UN-supervised peace process, which includes an active monitoring role by the OHCHR mission in Bogotá. Seven UN Special Rapporteurs and coordinators of Special Procedures have recently issued (May 14) an unusual joint statement expressing alarm at the situation in Colombia, which draws on over a decade of findings by UN mechanisms regarding recurrent threats to indigenous and Afro-Colombian human rights defenders and organizations, which have intensified in recent days.<sup>1</sup> There is an immediate need

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<sup>1</sup> Colombia: UN and OAS experts condemn crackdown on peaceful protests, urge a thorough and impartial investigation, 14 May 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27093&LangID=E>

for a country visit to Colombia by Special Rapporteur Francisco Cali Tzay and Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention, Alice Wairimu Nderitu.

There is genocide underway in Colombia and crimes against humanity being perpetrated against unarmed civilians in a country where human rights violations languish in impunity. We ask that you take immediate action and call upon you for attention at this critical moment.

Sincerely,

National Lawyers Guild, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Committee  
National Lawyers Guild, International Committee  
International Tribunal of Conscience of Peoples in Movement  
Semilla Warunkwa – International Office, New York  
ProtectTheSacredNYC  
TONATIERRA

*cc: International & Colombian authorities*

*Mr. Clément Voule, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#)*

*Ms.Irene Khan, [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)*

*Ms.Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders;](#)*

*[The Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#)*

*Mr. Tae-Ung Baik (Chair), Mr. Henrikas Mickevičius, (Vice- Chair), Ms. Aua Balde, Mr. Bernard Duhaime and Mr. Luciano Hazan*

*[The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention:](#) Ms. Leigh Toomey (Chair), Ms.Elina Steinerte (Vice-Chair), Mr.Mumba Malila, Ms.Miriam Estrada-Castillo and Ms. Priya Gopalan*

*Mr. Morris Tidball-Binz, [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#)*

*Mr. Nils Melzer, [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)*

*Mr. Francisco Cali Tzay, [Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples.](#)*