



National Lawyers Guild

June 20, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500 United States

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
U.S. Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

The Honorable Juan Carlos Pinzón
U.S. Ambassador to Colombia
1724 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202 387 8338

Dear President Biden, Secretary Blinken and Ambassador Pinzón;

On June 19, 2022, the people of Colombia unequivocally voted for their next president and vice-president, Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez Mina. These results have now been recognized by the outgoing President, Iván Duque, who has called for a “harmonious, institutional, and transparent transition.” Runoff candidate Rodolfo Hernandez has also conceded the election. While we commend the U.S. government joining other world leaders in recognizing the Pacto Histórico victory, we hope to see a concrete willingness to work with the new administration as peers and to condemn any attempts to subvert a peaceful transition.

Although Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez Mina have won the election, during the campaign, there were repeated death threats and wide reports of violence from paramilitary forces targeting progressive candidates and members of social movements mobilizing the Colombian people to participate in this historic election. On the day of elections, two electoral witnesses and human rights defenders for the Pacto Histórico (Historic Pact)—Roberto Carlos Rivas and Ersain de Jesús Ramírez Ospina—were assassinated.

Additionally, the Colombian military and national police have failed to take the necessary actions to protect voters and candidates. Moreover, there is fear and concern that military and national police will slow-walk or shirk their duties in an effort to undermine a peaceful transition. These forces, the Colombian military and police, rely upon US funding and swift support for the new administration would discourage potential anti-democratic behavior. The United States must not condone, validate or normalize such violations or violence.

For several decades, U.S. policies in Colombia have aided in the training and financing of military and paramilitary forces through failed policies like [Plan Colombia](#) and drug intervention initiatives. It is time to recognize that military aid is not what Colombia needs: Colombia needs a strengthening of institutions and humanitarian assistance which begins with US recognition of the inherent sovereignty of the Colombian people and nation-state to determine its own political and economic future.

The [Leahy Law](#), which prohibits the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense from providing military assistance to foreign security forces that violate human rights with impunity, provides us with a legal and moral framework to avoid U.S. taxpayer money from being used to support state sponsored gross human rights violations. It is past due that the U.S. government recognizes that through omission and commission, the Colombian military and national police are complicit in human rights violations and any interference in the peaceful transition of power should lead to application of the Leahy Law.

Similarly, we expect the United States to counter corruption and condemn fraudulent capital flight such as that which members of congress have raised in relation to former Colombian presidential candidate Rodolfo Hernandez in a letter dated June 16, 2022.

Founded in 1937, the National Lawyers Guild is the oldest and largest progressive law association in the United States with a mission to hold and defend human rights above property interests. We look forward to the US building relationships in Latin America based on shared humanity and commitment to the democratic will of the people. Colombia is a wonderful place to start.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Adely, NLG President
Ken Montenegro, NLG Legal Worker Vice President
Natali Segovia, NLG Task Force on the Americas

Cc:

Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Honorable Rashida Tlaib
Honorable Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia
Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Honorable David N Cicilline
Honorable Pramila Jayapal
Honorable Jim McGovern