

May 7, 2021

Iván Duque Márquez  
President of the Republic of Colombia  
Colombia

*Via email*



Excellency:

I am writing on behalf of the over 390,000 members of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) in Canada. NUPGE strongly condemns the brutal repression of the Colombian people who have exercised their right to freedom of expression against the tax reform bill and the anti-social policies of your government.

According to information we have received, a vicious military escalation has taken place. State agencies—the National Police and the Mobile Anti-riot Squad (ESMAD)—social cleansing groups, and plainclothes police officers, with the help of the army, have intimidated, persecuted, repressed, injured, and murdered union and social leaders. They have also indiscriminately targeted the general population.

According to reports from human rights organizations, there have been more than 1,089 cases of violence. They include 726 arbitrary detentions, 28 protesters killed, 234 people wounded, 5 demonstrators who disappeared, and 6 women raped by ESMAD soldiers.

The announcement of the withdrawal of the tax reform bill is a triumph of the massive social protest and citizen mobilization. But it does not satisfy the demands of the Colombian people, as your government has proposed the immediate presentation of another bill, through methods that are still unclear.

For this reason, we support the continuity of the strike and peaceful mobilizations in line with the decisions of the National Strike Committee (Comité Nacional del Paro) and the multiple social organizations that accompany it.

We support the legitimate demands of the Colombian people for:

- demilitarization of the urban areas and cities
- dismantling of ESMAD



- consequences for those responsible for the brutal repression of the demonstrations
- guarantees for the right of peaceful protest
- negotiations on the Unified Emergency Plan with the National Strike Committee

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LB', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Larry Brown  
President

cc: Jorge Londoño de la Cuesta, Ambassador of Colombia to Canada  
Marcel Lebleu, Ambassador of Canada to Colombia  
Jeroen Beirnaert, Director, Human and Trade Union Rights, ITUC  
Bert Blundon, NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer  
National Executive Board