

October 1, 2021

Juan Diego Gómez Jiménez  
President of the Senate

*Via email*

Jennifer Arias  
President of the House of Representatives

Members of the Colombian Congress

**Re: Appropriate treatment of bills**

Respectful greetings:

I am writing on behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), an affiliate of Public Services International (PSI) in Canada. PSI is a global union federation of over 700 unions representing 30 million workers in 154 countries, bringing their voices to the United Nations, the ILO, WHO, and other regional and global organizations. NUPGE represents nearly 400,000 workers across Canada. As PSI affiliates, we defend trade union and labour rights and fight for universal access to quality public services.

We are in solidarity with Colombian workers, in particular with the organizations in that country that are affiliates of Public Services International. As part of the international community that closely follows what is happening in Colombia, we call on the Colombian Senate and House of Representatives to give the appropriate and accelerated processing to the bills proposed by the National Strike Committee, in order to advance the solutions that the Colombian people are demanding, the same demands that gave rise to the social outbreak that began on April 28, 2021.

We make this request to you after learning in detail what has happened since April 28, the date on which trade unions and the Colombian people took to the streets to demand better living conditions and solutions to the main problems facing the Colombian population.

We understand that, in the face of the mobilization and social protest, the government of President Iván Duque withdrew the tax reform that he had presented to Congress. Bill 010, which would have reformed the health system in his country, was abandoned. These were requests that had been formulated by the National Strike Committee, the body that called for the mobilization that began on April 28.



We also received the report of the observations and recommendations issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights after its visit to Colombia, June 8–10, 2021. It recognizes the legitimacy of the people's demands. It also acknowledges the excessive use of police/military force to repress social protest, calling to reverse this situation. It also calls for increasing citizen participation in creating solutions to the serious problems suffered by the Colombian people.

We have also learned that the Colombian people's demands put forward during more than 2 months of continuous protest remain unresolved by the national government. This is why the National Strike Committee, through different political parties, has presented legislative initiatives, including

- basic emergency income;
- universal free education for all students in public higher education;
- strengthening of the public health system and dignity and formalization of employment to tackle the pandemic;
- support for the reactivation of the agricultural sector;
- support for the economic reactivation of micro and small enterprises and job creation;
- repeal of Decree 1174 of 202, on the social protection floor;
- promotion, prevention, and training actions to combat gender-based violence;
- guarantees for the exercise of the right to peaceful protest;
- reform of the youth statute; and
- reform of the national police.

The Colombian people have taken to the streets to express their discontent and dissatisfaction with the decisions taken through their institutions, a situation that makes evident the need to provide a response to their demands in the Congress of the Republic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LB' with a stylized flourish.

Larry Brown  
President

cc: Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer  
National Executive Board