

URGENT ACTION

DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT TO SOLVE CRISIS

The national strike that began last April 28, 2021 continues with hundreds of mobilizations across the country. Authorities responded with stigmatization of protestors and excessive use of force causing human rights violations and possible crimes under international law. As the situation worsens, and after a working visit from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to Colombia, the Organization of Americas States (OAS) Member States have yet to act to help resolve this crisis. We call on the United States' Department of State to lead a diplomatic initiative within the OAS to analyse and propose human rights-based solutions for Colombia.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 62.21**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Mr. Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State United States Department of State
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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Dear Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken,

I am writing you to express my deepest concern for the worsening situation in Colombia. Since April 28, 2021 people took the streets to reject a proposed tax reform and asking for significant improvements in the government's health, social, and economic policies. Protestors have also called for an end to the killings of human rights defenders in the country and the full implementation of the Peace Accords.

The harsh response from the government has ranged from the stigmatization of those protesting, to the security forces engaging in excessive use of force accounting for dozens of cases of possible extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture and other cruel and inhumane treatment and gender based violence, among others. All these are human rights violations and possible crimes under international law.

In addition, there are credible reports of urban paramilitarism, that is individuals in civilian clothes, acting with the acquiescence and tolerance of the security forces, that have killed and injured protesters in several cities.

A month and a half after the beginning of the national strike, Member States of the Organization of Americas States (OAS) are alarmingly unresponsive. The silence of Member States is costing dozens of lives and risks an escalation of the situation in a country known for its sad history of conflict.

It is time for member states to take concrete actions to help overcome this crisis.

I therefore call on to you to lead a regional diplomatic initiative within the Organization of Americas States to analyze and propose human rights-based solutions to the current crisis in Colombia.

Sincerely,

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A national strike “Paro Nacional” started on April 28, 2021 triggered by a proposed tax reform from President Ivan Duque that aimed at increasing tax revenues to counter the country’s economic crisis, which after a year of economic slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, had deteriorated.

The “Paro Nacional” also takes on several demands that Colombia’s civil society expressed in similar protests back in late 2019, such as calling for an end to the killing of human rights defenders, the fulfilment of the Peace Accords, an accessible, safe and comprehensive health system, and a thorough police reform. People now add to their list of demands an end to police repression during protests.

Until May 31, 2021 [local human rights organizations](#) documented an estimate of 45 persons killed by law enforcement officials, 25 victims of sexual violence, 6 victims of gender based violence, 1649 arbitrary detentions, and 65 people with eye injuries. [The National Attorney Office indicates that there are 129 people disappeared](#) in a report issued on May 24, 2021.

[Amnesty International verified videos](#) where the Colombian police used lethal weaponry as well as indiscriminate use of less lethal weapons such as tear gas, water cannons, and other materials against demonstrators in several parts of the country, some of them [manufactured in the United States of America](#).

On May 28, 2021, The United States’ Secretary of State met with Colombia’s Vice President and Foreign Affairs Minister and reported that he [“reiterated the unquestionable right of citizens to protests peacefully”](#) and [“expressed his concerns and condolences for the loss of life during protest”](#).

From June 8 to 10, more than three weeks after a formal request to visit the country, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights was able to deploy a working visit in the country.

At present, no Member State has called for the Organization of Americas States Permanent Council to learn first-hand about the situation nor analyse or offer their good offices to contribute with solutions to the human rights crisis in Colombia.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: August 9, 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: People Protesting in Colombia (They, them)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a