

Open letter to the European Parliament and European countries parliaments:

**THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA MUST ABIDE BY THE RECOMMENDATIONS
MADE BY THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (IACHR)**

We, human rights organizations, groups in solidarity with Colombia, citizens and residents of Europe, ask the European Parliament and European countries parliaments to urge the Colombian government to comply with and implement the observations and recommendations made by of the **Inter-American Commission on Human Righ** (IACHR) and to adopt concrete actions to stop the serious and systematic human rights violations occurring in this Latin American country.

Brussels, 09-07-2021. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) visited Colombia from 8 to 10 June 2021 with the aim of verifying the grim human rights situation occurring in the context of the social protests, which began on 28 April. After the working visit, the IACHR presented its observations and 40 recommendations to the government of Colombia, in a document released on 7 July 2021 (1).

Contrary to expectations, in a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the 7th July 2021, the Colombian state rejected and distanced itself from the observations made by the IACHR and questioned the suitability and veracity of the work carried out on the ground by this body and the testimonies of those who have been victims of repression (2).

We view with great concern the statements made by the Colombian government aimed at questioning and ignoring the observations and recommendations issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights which in itself constitutes a blatant disregard for their obligations under the American Convention on Human Rights (a treaty ratified by Colombia since 1973) and a disregard for the principles of good faith and pacta sunt servanda that are the basis of international law.

We deeply regret that the Colombian Government continues with its denialist practice, through which they try to hide their responsibility in the institutional violence during these 73 days of protests in Colombia and ignores the measures that have been recommended by the most important human rights body in the Americas.

The world has witnessed this barbarism. We have seen painful reports, audios and videos of police brutality and crimes committed. Hundreds of young people, victims, their relatives, social and human rights organizations have had the courage to denounce these serious human rights violations despite the general climate of terror and threat that has been established in Colombia.

For this reason, in addition to the IACHR, other international verification missions have travelled to Colombia, such as the International Mission of Solidarity and Observation of Human Rights - Argentina;

the Mission of Parliamentarians of Catalonia (Spain); and the SOS Colombia Mission, which seeks to guarantee the right to protest and confront impunity in Colombia. These missions have produced reports that confirm the same situation.

However, the IACHR is one of the competent bodies to deal with matters related to compliance with the commitments made by the signing states. This convention has been incorporated into the Colombian domestic legal system and is part of the constitutional block. Therefore, the recommendations of the IACHR must be applied by the Colombian government and it should adopt all the provisions that allow for the rights and freedoms that are currently being violated, to be respected, as stipulated in articles 1 and 2 of the American Convention, as warned by the Colombian Constitutional Court has warned (3).

In its observations, the IACHR highlighted that social protests in Colombia have taken place in recent years as a result of "the profound inequality in the distribution of wealth, poverty, extreme poverty, and access to economic, social and cultural rights, in particular education, work and health. Likewise, the high levels of violence and impunity, as well as ethnic-racial and gender discrimination", a situation that could be verified, and which is part of the structural and historical demands of Colombian society (4).

As part of its mandate, the IACHR in Colombia verified some of the human rights violations committed in the context of the protests, such as: the stigmatisation of demonstrators; the disproportionate use of force; ethnic-racial violence; violence against journalists and medical missions; irregularities in transfers for protection; allegations of disappearances; as well as the use of military assistance, the use of disciplinary powers and the military criminal jurisdiction (5). Also the use of gender-based violence as a mechanism of repression against women, girls and LGBTI community (6).

The IACHR highlighted the Colombian governments' indiscriminate use of firearms against demonstrators and non-participants in the protests, the actions of armed people in civilian clothes, some of whom apparently acted with the acquiescence of members of the police (7), the physical, sexual and verbal aggressions, the use of glass marbles, bullets or rubber ammunition, as well as the indiscriminate and uninterrupted firing of tear gas or asphyxiating gases sometimes fired directly at the heads and thoraxes of the demonstrators (8). In this regard, the IACHR stated that it had received at least ten testimonies from people who suffered eye injuries of varying severity (9).

After a rigorous analysis based on international human rights law, the IACHR made 40 recommendations to the Colombian government, which include, among others, separating the National Police and its ESMAD from the Ministry of Defence (10) and promoting and strengthening a genuine national dialogue process, with the participation of all sectors, especially those who have been most affected by historical, social and structural discrimination in the country (11). In addition to the recommendations, the IACHR announced the installation of a "Special Human Rights Follow-up Mechanism for Colombia" (12).

We therefore call on the European Parliament and European countries parliaments:

1. To express support and backing for the observations and recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR).
2. To express support and backing for the IACHR's announcement to install a "Special Follow-up Mechanism on Human Rights for Colombia that will contribute to the consolidation of peace in the various sectors of society".
3. Adopt the report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and of the International Verification Missions that have travelled to Colombia, as important inputs in the analysis of the situation and in relation to the recommendations they have made.
4. Call on the Colombian government to comply with and implement the observations and recommendations made by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

SIGNATURES

I. ORGANISATIONS

First Signatories

1. Defendamos La Paz Internacional.
2. Nexus Human Rights -Belgium.
3. Intal –Latin America
4. JOC Internationale.

Germany

5. Kolumbienkampagne Berlin
6. Unidos por la Paz Alemania

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11. SIEMPRE RED DE APOYO A mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe en Bélgica
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Canada

13. COLECTIVO POR LA MEMORIA SALVADOR ALLENDE
14. Chile
15. Defendamos La Paz capítulo Chile
16. Defendamos la paz internacional
17. Invisibles Por La Paz
18. Pacto Histórico en Chile

Colombia

19. Congreso de los Pueblos
20. Cooperativa multiactiva agropecuaria encanto de manantial COOPAMARO
21. CORPORACIÓN VIDA DEL RÍO FUCHA - CORVIF
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23. Asociación Codo a Codo.

Spain

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27. Asociación de colombianos en el país vasco
28. Asociación Pueblo y Dignidad Asturias
29. Colectivo de Solidaridad por la Justicia y Dignidad de los Pueblos. COLICHE

30. **Comité de Solidaridad co América Latina (COSAL XIXON)**
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33. **Huitaca pacto por la vida y por la paz**
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37. **SOLdePAZ.Pachakuti**

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