



Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón  
President of the Republic of Colombia

9<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Dear President Santos,

As Members of the European Parliament, we are following closely, the current situation in Colombia regarding the protests organised by the Agrarian, Peasant, Ethnic and Popular National Summit.

Since these protests began on 30 May, there have been numerous reports of alleged human rights violations against indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian and rural farming communities. These violations have occurred in the context of peaceful strike action they are conducting, together with social movements, in a bid to demand the fulfilment of previous governmental agreements on rural reforms made in 2013.

In particular, we are deeply concerned about the behaviour of the ESMAD (Colombia's anti-riot police) which has been accused of verbally and physically attacking protesters, and carrying out arbitrary detentions. Such actions so far have resulted in the death of three indigenous leaders, Messrs Gersaín Cerón Cuainás, Marco Aurelio Diaz and Willington Quibarecama Naquirucama, and more than 130 people have been injured.

In addition, members of paramilitary groups have allegedly intervened to bring the protests to an end. In one such incident, on the first day of the national strike, four environmental human rights defenders, Messrs William Gutiérrez, Orlando Gutiérrez, Wilson Vargas and Rito Mena, members of the Ríos Vivos Movement in the department of Antioquia, received death threats in their homes by alleged paramilitar members.

Considering the level of risk posed by this current wave of violence within the context of this agrarian strike, and the historic moment in which Colombia finds itself with regard to the peace negotiations with the FARC and ELN guerrilla groups, we believe that it is essential that the Colombian government take all necessary steps to guarantee the right to peaceful social protest in order for the country to transition from armed confrontation to a peaceful model of social and political conflict resolution.



In this regard, we respectfully urge your government to:

- Guarantee that the human rights of those who exercise their legitimate right to peacefully protest are not violated by the ESMAD, paramilitary groups or any other state or non-state actor, effectively ensuring that their physical and psychological integrity is protected;
- Investigate the alleged violations committed against protesters, in particular the deaths of the indigenous leaders and the members of the Ríos Vivos Movement. Immediately release those who have been arbitrarily detained, and where detentions are made, ensure that the rights of those detained are respected. Provide the required medical attention to those protestors who were injured in the context of these protests;
- Make every effort to negotiate with the different groups on strike in order to hear their petitions and reach an agreement in a peaceful manner.

We acknowledge the significant advances made in Colombia towards bringing the armed conflict to an end and the importance of the peace process that is underway, and reaffirm our support in bringing about a true, just and lasting social peace.

Sincerely,

**Tania González Peñas** (MEP, Vice-Chair of the Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community)

**Ana María Gomes** (MEP, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs)

**Molly Scott Cato** (MEP, Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly)

**Gabriele Zimmer** (MEP, President GUE/NGL, member Conference of Presidents)

**Xabier Benito Ziluaga** (MEP, Delegation for relations with Mercosur)

**Estefanía Torres Martínez** (MEP, Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly)

**Miguel Urbán Crespo** (MEP, Committee on Foreign Affairs)

**Lola Sánchez Caldentey** (MEP, Committee on Development)

**Soraya Post** (MEP, Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America)



**Paloma López Bermejo** (MEP, Committee on Industry, Research and Energy)

**Fabio De Masi** (MEP, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs)

**Marina Albiol Guzmán** (MEP, Vice-Chair Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly)

**Ernest Urtasun** (MEP, Vice-Chair Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly)

**Lidia Serna Rodríguez** (MEP, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development)

**Marc Tarabella** (MEP, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development)

**Kostandinka Kuneva** (MEP, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs)

**Merja Kyllönen** (MEP, Committee on Transport and Tourism)

**Jude Kirton-Darling** (MEP, Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community)

**Bart Staes** (MEP, Committee on Budgetary Control)

**Martina Anderson** (MEP, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs)

**Matt Carthy** (MEP, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development)

**Lynn Boylan** (MEP, Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety)

**Liadh Ní Riada** (MEP, Committee on Budgets and Committee on Fisheries)

**João Pimenta Lopes** (MEP, Vice-Chair Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)

**João Ferreira** (MEP, Vice-Chair Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly)

**Miguel Viegas** (MEP, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs)

**Maria Heubuch** (MEP, Committee on Development)

**Eleonora Forenza** (MEP, Vice-Chair Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee)

**Javier Couso Permuy** (MEP, Committee on Foreign Affairs)

**Helmut Scholz** (MEP, Committee on International Trade)

**Marisa Matias** (MEP, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs)

**Josu Juaristi Abaunz** (MEP, Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety)

**Stelios Kouloglou** (MEP, Vice-Chair Committee on Development)