**We Stand with Colombian Civil Society Protesting the Duque Administration’s Rollbacks on Labor, Human Rights, Peace, and the Bombing of Children**

Across the country, shared and independent agendas will converge in the November 21 strike. Overall, the mobilization speaks to wide dissatisfaction with the government’s response to massacres against social leaders, indigenous peoples, rural women and their communities, labor and pension reforms, student protests, corruption, and the recalcitrant implementation of the 2016 peace accords.

Over 40 Colombian unions totaling over one million members set the date for a nationwide strike on November 21. Joining them will be Defendamos la Paz, the student and women’s movements, Afro-Colombian and indigenous leadership and environmental organizations. The labor and pension reforms protested are part of a [larger reform package](https://lasillavacia.com/rayos-x-al-paro-del-21n-74527), which include the privatization of Colombia’s pension fund, hourly contracts, and a [wage lower than the set minimum](https://www.portafolio.co/economia/polemica-propuesta-para-que-los-jovenes-ganen-menos-del-minimo-534461) for students 25 and under. These changes are a blatant slap in the face to the last 10 years efforts on the part of labor unions, human rights organizations and others to improve the conditions of and respect the rights of working people in Colombia. By making such changes the Duque administration is hammering the final nail on the coffin of the U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan, which was agreed to after the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement was put on hold by the U.S. Congress due to extremely concerning labor rights violations, many of which persist to this day.

The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC by its Spanish acronym) [joined the strike](https://www.colombia.com/actualidad/nacionales/21-de-noviembre-movilizacion-indigena-246318) after suffering multiple [massacres](https://www.wola.org/2019/10/colombia-indigenous-massacre/) and over [115](https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/dos-indigenas-asesinados-y-cuatro-heridos-en-toribio-cauca-articulo-888603) indigenous people murdered in 2019. [Students](http://www.acreescol.org/) have been [protesting](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/colombia-protests-students-funding-universities-191011071649011.html) for over three months, accusing the government of reneging on the deal they had made just a year ago as a result of prior protests, as well as corruption and lack of public education funding. Their Afro-Colombian counterparts are protesting due to the government’s antiquated approach to security that is only leading to increased displacement and harm to these communities. The Duque government’s efforts to undermine the transitional justice process agreed to in the peace accord are an impediment to peace, reconciliation and the rights of victims.

Those who marched in the last protests in favor of the peace accord and the protection of social leaders on July 26 will do so again. The resignation of Duque’s Defense Minister following the killing of [18 children](https://www.wradio.com.co/noticias/actualidad/cifra-de-menores-que-murieron-tras-bombardeo-en-caqueta-ascenderia-a-18-segun-testigos/20191112/nota/3977643.aspx) in a bombing by the Colombian army failed to [quell](https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-50409244) the widespread indignation caused by the event. [Government representatives](https://noticias.caracoltv.com/colombia/agitadores-internacionales-quieren-alterar-paro-del-21-de-noviembre-advierte-gobierno) have claimed Nicolas Maduro and other leftist leaders are behind the protest with the end of violently destabilizing the country. By stigmatizing a majority of peaceful protestors and [militarizing](https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/ordenan-acuartelamiento-de-las-fuerzas-militares-antes-del-paro-nacional-del-21-de-noviembre/640708) the sites of the protest, the government creates an environment ripe for state repression and disproportionate use of force by security forces.

The signatory organizations stand with the civil society organizations, trade unionists, women’s movements, Afro-Colombian, indigenous and rural women leaders protesting today. We adamantly reject violent state repression against peaceful protesters exercising their constitutional right. If passed, the labor and pension reforms would drive minimum wage workers further into poverty, invite informal unemployment, and weaken unions. We call on the Duque Administration to implement the fully and faithfully the 2016 peace accords in order to halt the killing of social leaders and ethnic populations by addressing its root causes. Further, we ask U.S. authorities to encourage implementation of the Ethnic Chapter of the peace accord, ensure effective implementation of all gender provisions and urge independent and effective investigations into the recent abuses committed by the Colombian armed forces, who are recipients of U.S. military assistance and whose behavior is subject to human rights conditions.

In the current context of mass mobilizations in several countries in Latin America and elsewhere [Hong Kong, Lebanon], we reaffirm that protest and strike rights have been and remain core human rights and foundational to building and maintaining democracy in most of the world.

In Colombia especially, those people and organizations who have exercised these rights have all too often suffered violent repression. In advance of the November 21 strike in Colombia, we urge Members of Congress to make clear that the United States remains committed to the exercise of these rights and unflinchingly critical of those who would repress such expressions of a vibrant democracy wherever they occur.

#21N #ParoNacional21Nov

#RazonesParaMarchar

#PaquetazoDeDuque

#DuqueContraElParo