

Statement by the German-Colombian Peace Institute - CAPAZ and its research partners

Translation from the Spanish Original

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Based on our academic work associated with CAPAZ and our expertise in peacebuilding processes, as professors of young people and supporters of the peace process in Colombia, we, the undersigned researchers,¹ express our profound rejection of the massive violation of human and citizens' rights committed in Colombia against people and organisations exercising their constitutional and legitimate right to protest.

Above all, we call for the defence and protection of life. We deeply condemn the deaths and abuses against men and women, and we sympathise with those injured, the fatal victims and their families.

According to human rights organisations, the Attorney General's Office and the Ombudsman's Office, there have been murders, disappearances and cases of sexual violence in different parts of the country. The situation is aggravated by the militarisation of the streets and the stigmatisation of protesting individuals and organisations.

We call on the national government to listen to the demands of civil society and to avoid the excessive use of force against protesters. The indiscriminate use of police force undermines the constitutional right to protest, threatens democracy and risks undermining the legitimacy of the Colombian State as a guarantor of human rights. It is of utmost importance that the public security forces respect the principles of legality, precaution, necessity and proportionality. Social protest cannot be subject to violent repression or criminalisation.

We call on the competent state bodies to investigate and clarify responsibilities for the acts of violence committed in recent days, including allegations of sexual violence against women demonstrators. We are convinced of the urgency of opening participatory dialogue with all sectors within the framework of respect for human rights. We stress the importance of peaceful conflict resolution, respect for political positions and the expression of these positions through the exercise of the right to protest, as necessary and essential components in building a democratic peace.

As part of our academic practice, we are available to contribute to this dialogue concerning the context of the events that took place.

¹ The undersigned are related to the Spanish Original (118 signatures).