



-MEDIA ADVISORY-

Day of Action for Human Rights in Colombia

Date: Tuesday, June 22, 2021 at 11:00 am

Location: Parliament Hill, Ottawa

#CanadaSOSColombia

June 22, 2021 - Ottawa, Quebec, Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver. Canadian civil society organizations denounce the Canadian government's inaction in light of the political crisis and severe human rights violations of protesters peacefully participating in the national strike in Colombia. In response, a *Day of Action for Human Rights in Colombia* will take place on June 22 across different cities in Canada:

Ottawa - Press briefing followed by a peaceful rally at 11am on Parliament Hill located at 111 Wellington Street, in front of the Eternal Flame. Members of Parliament Simon-Pierre Savard Tremblay and Alexis Brunelle Duceppe of the Bloc Québécois will be present as well as members of the Colombian diaspora and civil society organizations. <https://fb.me/e/1tUQZGlvN>

Toronto - Peaceful demonstration in front of the riding offices of Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, 344 Bloor St West, 6pm (local time).

Vancouver - Demonstration outside the county office of Harjit S. Sajjan, Minister of Defence, 6406 Victoria Drive, 12:45pm (local time). <https://fb.me/e/LFBx5BMY>

Calgary - Peaceful demonstration "The Right to Protest without Police Brutality", Harry Hays Building, 220 4 Ave SE, 6pm (local time).

Montréal - Canada-Colombia Virtual Parliamentary Forum between Colombian Senators and Councillors and Canadian Parliamentarians, 5-7pm (Eastern Time). For registration: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eHOAPCDDT4mo-e6uCPuBKg

Online:

- Mass mailing of letters to federal MPs to demand that the Canadian Prime Minister condemn the state crimes committed by the Colombian government.
- 24-hour Tweetathon to demand concrete action from the Canadian government on human rights violations in Colombia. #CanadaSOSColombia

This day of action is in solidarity with the ongoing protests in Colombia and will include performances and the presence of federal MPs.

The call for a *Day of Action for Human Rights in Colombia* is made by **24** Canadian-based civil society organizations working for human rights and social justice in Latin America, including international development and humanitarian NGOs, human rights organizations, trade unions, faith-based & ecumenical organizations, solidarity groups, as well as collectives of the Colombian diaspora in Canada. Notably, the organizations: Alternatives; Americas Policy Group/Groupe d'orientation politique pour les Amériques (APG-GOPA); Action et solidarité pour la Colombie (Asocol); Carrefour d'animation et participation à un monde ouvert (CAPMO); Colombian Action Solidarity Alliance (CASA); Codevelopment Canada; Collectif Paix, Territoire et Vie; Comité Ciudadano Colombian@s en Ottawa-Gatineau; Committee for Human Rights in Latin America (CDHAL); Comité de solidaridad Canadá por Colombia; Common Frontiers; CSN: Confédération des syndicats nationaux; Fonds humanitaire des Métallos/Steelworkers Humanity Fund; KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives; MiningWatch Canada; Ola Pazifica, Vancouver; Projet d'accompagnement solidarité Colombie (PASC); Public Service Alliance of Canada(PSAC)/ L'Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada (AFPC); The United Church of Canada; @reddediasporascolombia; +57 Conexión Colombia; 21 Somos Todos - Montreal; CISO - Centre international de solidarité ouvrière; Canadian Union of Public Employees/Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique.

The human Rights situation in Colombia: the facts

A national strike broke out in Colombia on April 28th over a now-cancelled tax and health reform, as well reforms to the pension system and labour regulations. It quickly turned into a large-scale popular mobilization to denounce social inequality and police repression in the country. Since the beginning of the protests, at least 50 protesters have been killed by the Colombian National Police, 5,500 people have been arbitrarily detained, at least 500 people have been reported missing, 180 protesters have been shot and nearly 25 protesters have suffered sexual violence at the hands of the Mobile Riot Squad (ESMAD).

These numbers are increasing every day.

The violence and repression shown by the Colombian state towards its local populations has led to a deterioration of human rights throughout the country. The government of Ivan Duque does not respect the Peace Agreement signed in 2016 and does not appear to have any intention of implementing its principles. Since its signing, human rights groups active on the field have reported more than 1,100 killings of social leaders, and only since the beginning of 2021, 28 massacres have been documented, in addition to the current toll from the national strike initiated on April 28.

The Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie, on an observation mission in Colombia, reported that between April 28, 2021 and June 19, 2021, several cases of human rights violations were recorded involving United Nations representatives and Colombian human rights defenders. Among others, on June 15, 2021 in Catatumbo, Sardinata paramilitary forces held hostage human rights defenders attached to the EJP, delegates from the UN, the MAPP-OAS (Mission to Accompany the Peace Process in Colombia of the Organization of American States) and the governor of the department for 13 hours. On June 18, 2021, a Colombian army helicopter fired on two human rights defenders in Cali, seriously injuring them, after they had been specifically identified and chased (source: <https://www.facebook.com/ProjetAccompagnementSolidariteColombie>)

Canada is a silent accomplice

Canada calls the Colombian government an ally. In addition to having been a major contributor to the signing of the Peace Agreement, the Canadian government has announced the granting of nearly 80 million dollars to the Colombian State to support its implementation in Colombia.

The year 2021 also marks the 10th anniversary of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement. This agreement has been strongly criticized by Canadian and Colombian civil society for allowing increased Canadian trade and investment in the energy and mining sectors, at the risk of exacerbating an already alarming human rights situation in Colombia. In addition, as part of this free trade agreement, Canadian-made armoured vehicles (LAVs) were sold by INKAS Armoured Vehicles Manufacturing to the Colombian government. Our coalition has reason to believe that these are the same weapons that are currently being used to repress the demonstrations.

It is also important to note that, following requests from civil society, Canada has committed to produce an annual report on the human rights situation in Colombia as part of the agreement. The last report, published in [2020](#), showed issues regarding the human rights situation in Colombia. In 2021, the Canadian government has yet to make this report public.

NDP MP Alexandre Boulerice, on June 9, 2021 attempted to table a motion in the Canadian Parliament demanding that Canada denounce the violence in Colombia. Once again, the Canadian government refused to act: Liberal MPs, as well as the Conservatives, blocked the adoption of the motion. In the words of M. Boulerice, "it is very disappointing coming from parties that claim to defend human rights."

Bloc Québécois MPs also expressed deep concern about the current situation in Colombia. "With respect to human rights, the Canadian government has an obligation to report to the Canadian public on the situation in Colombia, under the trade agreements that bind us. The federal government must hold Colombia accountable," said Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe.

What the coalition is asking for

As Colombia plunges into a deepening crisis, Canada's words and actions on human rights seem more contradictory than ever.

We ask the Government of Canada:

1. To issue a stronger statement than the one issued on May 9th to urge the Colombian government to respect the fundamental human rights of the protesters.
2. Adopt a coherent, whole-of-government approach to the situation in Colombia. Such an approach must bring together Canada's foreign policy, international aid, trade and investment, and immigration programs in the defence of human rights, and examine how Canada's own foreign policy, defence, and trade and investment interests undermine peace efforts in Colombia.
3. Use its diplomatic influence to advance human rights and peacebuilding in Colombia, including guarantees that the Peace Agreement signed in 2016 is fully implemented.
4. Enforce the principles of its own military policy on foreign arms sales by Canadian companies and suspend all arms sales to the Colombian National Police and Army until they are reformed, including the abolition of the Mobile Riot Squad (ESMAD).
5. To recognize Colombia as a non-secure country in order to activate the reception of refugees who are currently fleeing official and para-official persecution.

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For more information or to request an interview:

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