



STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC
For the right to peace and life with
dignity

The Mennonite Christian Church of Colombia, inspired by faith in Jesus and His gospel of Peace with Justice, categorically rejects the acts of violence unleashed in the country during the last week in the context of, on the one hand, a failed government proposal to approve a tax reform that threatens the lives of Colombians, and without the proper consensus of different groups, not only political groups but also social organizations and labor unions; and, on the other hand, the new proposals for labor and health reform and the rising poverty rate.

In recent days, acts of vandalism have been unleashed against civilians, police officers, buildings, and citizens' property. However, the violence exercised by State forces has claimed the lives of dozens of people, mostly young people who have marched peacefully in different cities as evidence of their commitment to a vision of a country that promotes the dignity of its citizens. And as reported in the media, the violence perpetrated by insurgents and the police has left hundreds of people injured, arbitrarily abducted, and subjected to sexual violence.

As a Mennonite Christian Church, we affirm the constitutional rights that state "peace is a right and a duty of which compliance is mandatory" (Article 22) and that Colombian citizens have the right to demonstrate publicly and peacefully (Article 37), which is the right to demand that all other rights be fulfilled. We believe that the State must guarantee this right by protecting the lives of those who participate in protests. For this reason, we reject the militarization of our cities to repress the demonstrations that are evidence of the people's discontent with the government and other State agencies in the context of the pandemic. We strongly denounce and condemn the excessive use of police force, as well as the violent actions that have infiltrated the protests. We also express our concern for the violations of human rights by State agents.

Therefore, we urge the national government to stop its suppressive tactics and establish spaces for dialogue with different social and political movements that will lead to constructive consensus on the issues that plague the country with the goal of finding just solutions that are in accordance with the interests and needs of the citizens. As a Church, we commit ourselves to support efforts that move in this direction and we offer our gifts and capabilities grounded in our pacifist legacy of more than 500 years.

We thank the international community for its expressions of solidarity during this time. We urge them to remain vigilant in monitoring the development of this turbulent situation, as well as to denounce any human rights violations that may occur.

Bogotá, Colombia, May 5, 2021

National Committee - IMCOL