

International organizations alert over violence and attacks in the context of upcoming elections



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Brussels/Bogotá, 2 February 2022 - Oidhaco and the signatory organisations below wish to express our serious concerns about the deterioration of the security situation in Colombian regions, and the increase in attacks against social leaders and political candidates in the pre-electoral period.

¹ Taula Catalana por la Paz y los Derechos Humanos en Colombia, formada por: Ajuntament de Lleida Assemblea de Cooperació per la Pau Associació Catalana per la Pau Centre Delàs Estudis per la Pau Comissió Catalana d'ajuda al Refugiats Consell Nacional de la Joventut de Catalunya Cooperació Entrepobles Fons Català de Cooperació al Desenvolupament Foro Internacional de Víctimas Fundación Indera Fundación Pau i Solidaritat – CCOO Catalunya International Action for Peace - IAP Intersindical – CSC Justicia i Pau Colectiva de Mujeres Refugiadas Exiliadas y Migradas de Colombia en España La Fàbric@ Lafede.cat Lliga dels Drets dels Pobles Nabowa - Xarxa per la Pau Mujer Diáspora Oxfam Intermón Plataforma Unitària contra les Violències de Gènere REDS Sindicalistes Solidaris – UGT Catalunya Universitat Internacional de la Pau - UNIPAU

So far in 2022, at least thirteen social leaders have been assassinated in the country², including a Wounaan indigenous leader in San Juan and three indigenous leaders in Cauca³. Thirteen massacres were also perpetrated, leaving a total of 39 fatalities⁴ in different regions of Colombia.

Other events that demonstrate the deterioration of the security situation include murders and threats against the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó⁵, the community in the Montes de María region⁶ and the National Association of Small Scale Farming Reserve Zones⁷. What is more, on Wednesday 19th January, a car bomb attack was perpetrated at the headquarters of the Joel Sierra Human Rights Foundation, in the centre of Saravena, Arauca, leaving one person dead and 20 others injured⁸. The incident occurred at a time when at least 50 human rights defenders were gathered for a protection workshop.

Oidhaco and international organisations recently expressed concerns about the situation in Arauca⁹, Cauca¹⁰ and the Pacific coastal region of Colombia.

We emphasize that this wave of violence is occurring in the period leading up to elections. The Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) warned that 58% of the municipalities that are authorized to vote in the elections for the 16 peace seats, are at risk of both fraud and violence¹¹. According to the EOM's risk maps, of those 58%, which represent 97 municipalities, 43 are at extreme risk, 44 at high risk and 10 at medium risk. Last Friday, 21 January, a two-and-a-half-kilo unexploded bomb was found a meeting place in the Teusaquillo area of Bogotá, where several electoral candidates had been gathered the day before, including Alirio Uribe, a human rights defender.

The elections for the victims' seats, giving the chance to 16 victims to be representatives, are a historic opportunity created by the peace process to begin to bridge the gap between the areas most affected by the armed conflict and the rest of the country. The upcoming legislative and presidential elections are crucial for the future of the **peace process in**

² Indepaz: [líderes sociales y defensores de derechos humanos y firmantes de acuerdo de paz asesinados en 2022](#) (accessed 31/1/2022)

³ Indepaz: [líderes sociales y defensores de derechos humanos y firmantes de acuerdo de paz asesinados en 2022](#) (accessed 31/1/2022)

El Tiempo: [cada día asesinan un líder social en Colombia. 20 de enero 2022/4](#)

⁴ Indepaz: [informe de masacres en Colombia durante el 2020-2021-2022](#). (último acceso 31/1/2022)

⁵ El Espectador: [plan de ejecuciones del clan del Golfo en la Comunidad de San José de Apartadó](#). 9 de enero 2022

⁶ El Tiempo: [el clan del golfo amenaza el debate electoral](#). 11 de enero 2022

⁷ Twitter: Anzorc: https://twitter.com/ANZORC_OFICIAL/status/1484892486883590155

⁸ Semana: [terror en Saravena: las crudas imágenes que dejó el atentado terrorista con carro bomba](#). 20 de enero 2022

⁹ [Comunicado](#) de las organizaciones internacionales de la sociedad civil sobre la grave situación humanitaria y la crisis de derechos humanos en el departamento de Arauca.

¹⁰ Comunicado Espacio de Cooperación para la Paz: Alarma Cauca, 25 de enero

¹¹ Caracol: [43 municipios donde se eligen curules de paz, en riesgo extremo de fraude](#), 24 de enero 2022

Colombia. It is important that they can be carried out **with guarantees for the candidates' security and participation.**

We therefore request:

- That the human rights dialogue between the European Union and the Colombian Government be held as soon as possible, and that the EU expresses its concern about the intensification of violence against human rights defenders and social leaders in the current context, asking the Colombian Government to implement collective protection plans as established in Decree 660 of 2020.

To the European Union and the Governments of Norway, Switzerland, and United Kingdom:

- That in its relations with the Colombian Government it insists on dialogue and support for Humanitarian Agreements with all armed actors that have a presence in Colombian regions.
- That the Colombian Government provides guarantees for the political participation of all parties, and in particular of all candidates throughout the national territory, in the context of the upcoming elections.

To the European Union Electoral Observation Mission in Colombia:

- Take into account the intrinsic relationship between violence against social leaders, human rights defenders and small-scale farming communities, and electoral violence, thereby including a human rights approach in its observation work.
- Urge the Colombian Government to guarantee investigations into attacks against electoral candidates.