

# *Hundreds of cities around the world join to defend peace in Colombia*

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Bogota, July 27 (RHC)-- Over 100 cities around the world held demonstrations Friday to support Colombian social organizations that are demanding President Ivan Duque guarantee the safety of human rights defenders and social activists.

"In Colombia, workers have always sought that governments guarantee the right to the exercise of democratic freedoms of all citizens, regardless of their political affiliation, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, economic and social status. Likewise, we have bet on the political solution of the armed conflict and supported the peace agreements," Colombian Central Union of Workers (CUT) in a public statement.

Summoned by the "Let's Defend Peace" (DLP), thousands marched July 26th on the main avenues of over 50 Colombian cities. In addition, demonstrations and artistic events took place in Athens, Austin, Barcelona, Berlin, Bern, Bilbao, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Dubai, Elche, Stockholm, Frankfurt, Gijon, Guadalajara, Innsbruck, and London, among other cities.

This international mobilization is the result of an unprecedented organizational effort through which human rights defenders worldwide seek to prevent Colombia from continuing its current endemic violence against Indigenous and Campesinos in rural areas trying to recuperate their land and lives after a 50-year civil conflict supposedly ended in 2016.

"Today, on July 26, my cry is for all hearts to heal and hope to be released! Let's wake up and march for the social leaders' lives in Colombia. Join, schedule, participate and spread. Let's defend peace."

Since the 2016 Peace Agreement was signed between former President Juan Manuel Santos and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), at least 710 social leaders and 138 ex-guerrilla fighters have been murdered by paramilitary forces that have maintained their close relations with Colombian far-right politicians and drug cartels.

"This matter is very serious and worrisome in itself. The State should commit to halt such a wave of violence," the CUT said and demanded "real and effective protection of the right to life of all Colombians."

The "Let's Defend Peace" movement has recently emerged as a united front comprising key former government and rebel negotiators from the FARC and ELN (among them whom is senator Roy Barreras), members of the Congressional Peace Commission, victims' organizations, academics, journalists and retired military personnel.

"We reject the killings of social leaders and human rights defenders... we need to defend the dignity of all people and denounce all forms of attacks against the rights of the poorest," the Caribbean and Latin American Confederation of Religious Persons (CLAR) said, and added that "we join to those human beings who work radically and passionately for a better world, even at risk of losing their lives."

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