



Ottawa, June 3, 2016

The honorable Stéphane Dion
Minister of Foreign Affairs
125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, ON
K1A 0G2

Dear Minister Dion:

We are writing to you today on behalf of the member organizations of the Americas Policy Group (APG) to express our deep concern regarding the situation in Colombia.

In the last days, we have received disturbing reports of indiscriminate and excessive force being used by the state security forces against Colombian citizens engaged in peaceful protest. To date, this has led to deaths, serious injuries and arrests of citizens taking part in the “*National Agrarian, Peasant, Ethnic and Grassroots Mobilization - for Good Living, A Structural Agrarian Reform and Dignified Cities – Sowing Hope, Harvesting our Country*”.

The current mobilization was organized by a broad coalition of Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant farmer organizations that have deep concerns with the Colombian government’s development model, in particular its impact on marginalized communities and their access to land and food security. The convenors of the mobilization are deeply disturbed by the failure of the Colombian government to keep the promises it made after previous mobilizations in 2013 which left 12 protesters dead, nearly 500 wounded and some 600 detained.

According to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), there have been indiscriminate attacks in the 38 points where Indigenous peoples are protesting, especially attacking women, children and the elderly. The most recent reports we have received indicate that to date three Indigenous people have been killed and 139 others have been wounded. States the ONIC:

[A] government that is currently in a peace process with the FARC and approaching one with the ELN should not and cannot use strategies of war against indigenous peoples involved in the Minga, who are collective subjects of special protection and actors for peace.

We urge the Government of Canada to express its concern to the Colombian authorities and to call on Colombia;

- To respect its citizens' right to peaceful protest and to cease the attacks against the protestors;
- To enter into immediate dialogue with the representatives of the organizations convening the mobilization in order to find a solution;
- To comply with the commitments it makes and has made in the past and which have gone unfulfilled.

We will anxiously await your response to our letter.

Sincerely,



Rachel Vincent
co-chair
Americas Policy Group



Jim Hodgson
co-chair
Americas Policy Group

c.c. MP Tony Clement
MP H el ene Laverdi ere
MP Elizabeth May
David Morrisson
Andr e Frenette