



Open Letter to the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS)

Since the demonstrations on 28 April this year, Amnesty International has been constantly monitoring the human rights situation in Colombia. These demonstrations were sparked by discontent over a tax reform proposed by the government and rapidly triggered protests over economic and social structural inequalities, over the lack of compliance with some of the provisions of the Peace Agreement and over the killing of social leaders and human rights defenders, among other multiple complaints.

Following the rigorous [investigation, analysis and verification of audiovisual evidence](#), Amnesty International concludes that Colombian law enforcement officers have frequently used excessive and unnecessary force to control the demonstrations. Moreover, the organization can confirm that these officers carried out forced disappearances and crimes of sexual violence that constitute torture. It should be noted that these crimes are not only human rights violations but also constitute crimes under international law. To May 28th, [Colombian civil society organizations](#) estimate that 43 people have lost their lives at the hands of law enforcement officials, while other 27 cases are under process of verification, in addition to 1,445 cases of arbitrary detentions, 47 people with eye injuries, 22 cases of sexual violence, and [106 cases of gender based violence](#), among others.

In addition, from the [highest level](#) of the Colombian authorities, stigmatizing language has been used against protestors and to date, there has been no official condemnation from these authorities of the human rights violations and crimes under international law committed by state officers. It should also be noted that Amnesty International has [explicitly called](#) on President Iván Duque to guarantee human rights in the context of the protests and allow international scrutiny of the situations described above. On the other hand, [650 civil society organizations](#) have demanded that the Colombian authorities give their consent for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to visit the country and put a follow-up mechanism in place in light of the serious human rights crisis that Colombia is facing.

The OAS Member States, in situations similar to those now being experienced by Colombia, i.e., where serious human rights violations and crimes under international law have been at the core of the state's response to social demonstrations, have not only convened the Permanent Council to learn first-hand about the situation, [including calling on the IACHR to submit report](#) as a specialized regional human rights body, but have also created [working groups](#) for the purpose of deepening their knowledge of the situation and seeking solutions from good offices. Similarly, the OAS, through its Secretary General, has made [calls](#) condemning such situations, while Member States have issued [resolutions condemning violence and a lack of protection and guarantee of human rights](#). Amnesty International finds the silence of the OAS and its Member States on the situation in Colombia to date disconcerting.

Taking into account that the OAS represents the multilateral forum par excellence of the Americas, Amnesty International calls on the authorities of its Member States to make every possible effort to ensure that the current human rights crisis is brought to the attention of this forum, in order to adopt solutions that not only guarantee the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, but also contribute to finding lasting solutions to the demands for economic and social rights. The organization also believes that the investigations into the violations of human rights and crimes under international law committed in the context of these demonstrations must be carried out in a serious, thorough and impartial manner by independent authorities and tried, if appropriate, by ordinary civilian courts.

Amnesty International urges the OAS and its Member States to condemn acts involving human rights violations and crimes under international law by law enforcement officers, as well as discourage the use of stigmatizing



language by the authorities. Similarly, it calls for this multilateral forum to take all steps at the highest level so that the IACHR, has the consent of the Colombian authorities to conduct an *in situ* visit and, after its visit, to report to the political bodies of the OAS.

The international community cannot be a mere spectator in the face of serious human rights violations and crimes under international law, the principle of shared responsibility to guarantee human rights requires them to act. Amnesty International urges the OAS and its Member States not to remain silent in the face of the human rights crisis in Colombia.