

LASA condemns violence by the mobile riot squad (ESMAD) against peaceful movement in Colombia

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The Executive Council of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) condemns arbitrariness and deplores the repression and acts of state violence, particularly by the mobile riot squad (*Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios*, ESMAD) who, together with government officials, sought to silence the political voice of the massive and peaceful movement on November 21st.

It also calls for the competent authorities to initiate rigorous investigations with a view to establishing responsibility for both acts of vandalism and the abuse of the public force specially against the students who demonstrated in and around the universities, as happened on the day of the strike.

On November 21st, students, teachers, trade-unionists, indigenous people, people of African descent and different women's movements called a national strike and a peaceful march. This day clearly showed the dissatisfaction of the citizenry with a government that has not complied with the agreements of the Peace process, and ignores the historical memory and the victims. The response of President Iván Duque's government was to repel, stigmatize and repress the protest while calling for a national dialogue as a rhetorical instrument.

We reiterate that peaceful protest is a fundamental human right that must be respected and guaranteed by the State, and freely exercised. The abuse of the public force cannot be tolerated under any circumstances or under any pretext, and in all cases, personal integrity and human life must be respected.

We urge the national government of Colombia to listen to citizenry in their just demands and to seek a solution to the widespread dissatisfaction as soon as possible, for the sake of a country seeking to consolidate a peace and reconciliation process.

For more than two months, in Latin America, we have seen the emergence of various protest movements that have been met with violence by States, and with the use of fear and terror to justify militarization and police repression, in the face of social dissent in countries such as Ecuador, Chile, Haiti, Bolivia, Nicaragua and now Colombia.

About LASA

The Latin American Studies Association (LASA) is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 13,000 members, over 60% of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe. LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.

If you wish to interview a LASA Executive Council member, you can contact the LASA communications office at (412) 648-7929 or send an email to lasa@lasaweb.org.

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