

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World Student Christian Federation  
Statement on the Human Rights situation in Colombia  
**RED ALERT IN COLOMBIA**

Buenos Aires / Geneva May 5, 2021

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) is a worldwide youth and student organization that brings together more than 107 affiliated and associated student movements in more than 90 countries.

As a Federation of student movements, the WSCF empowers and connects activist youth and students around the world on their journey towards the transformation of the future. The WSCF fosters a democratic culture for the mobilization of proactive youth in society, promoting positive change through dialogue and action among different traditions and cultures.

The WSCF is a Non-Governmental Organization with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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Since April 28, the Colombian people have gone out to the streets in the framework of a National Strike called by various unions and social movements, teachers, students, women, workers, small and medium-sized businesspeople, farmers, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities.

The strike was called with the aim of requiring Iván Duque's government not to present the tax reform bill in the National Congress. Despite the fact that the government announced that they are going to modify the text of the reform, the Colombian citizens are still on strike saying NO to a health reform that aims to deepen the privatization process of health in Colombia, along with many other discontents for the critical situation in terms of health, poverty, unemployment, hunger and violence that the country has been experiencing for several years and which have worsened with the Covid-19 pandemic. According to DANE<sup>1</sup> statistics, 42.5% of the Colombian population lives in poverty.

The response of the Colombian State to the demonstrations and expressions of discontent has been repression through the policy of "military assistance", a measure that militarizes the actions of the State in the face of peaceful demonstrations. The NGO *Temblores*<sup>2</sup> accounts that, between April 28, 2021 at 6 AM and May 5 AT 12 PM, there were at least 1708 cases of violence by the public forces, including: 222 victims of physical violence, 37 victims of homicidal violence, 831 arbitrary arrests against protesters, 312 violent interventions in the framework of peaceful protests, 22 victims of eye mutilation, 110 cases of firearm shootings and 10 victims of sexual violence.

Considering such data of the emergency context that Colombia is experiencing and concerning the risk of the population, the World Student Christian Federation expresses;

1. The need for the immediate halt of repression and constant violation of International Law and Human Rights of Colombian citizens in their legitimate right to social protest.
2. We call on the public security forces to protect the lives of citizens and to claim their right not to obey orders that imply violent actions against the physical integrity and dignity of people.

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<sup>1</sup> National Administrative Department of Statistics. Data on poverty and inequality for the year 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-monetaria>

<sup>2</sup><https://twitter.com/TembloresOng/status/1390023602813161477>

3. We ask the students of the Colombian student movements, farmer and indigenous organizations, women and Human Rights activists to continue protecting themselves and resisting in a Non-Violent way the provocations of the public force. We call on the population to take care of each other in solidarity and fellowship in order to avoid more deaths, violence and attacks.
4. We call upon the United Nations and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachellet, to act decisively by taking the corresponding actions in the case, without political doubts or pressure from the Colombian government and the powers allied to the Colombian national security policy.
5. We ask churches, universities and Faith-Based Organizations to become a physical refuge for protesters who are on the street and at risk, through their different infrastructures and places of worship. The protection of life and the search for peace are closely linked to the mission of such institutions and can be protected by International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
6. The WSCF holds the Colombian State responsible for the violation of Human Rights in Colombia, for the thousands of attacked people and for the dozens of deaths caused by the disproportionate response of the State to the legitimate right to protest. Understanding that it is the government who controls the monopoly of force. The WSCF also demands that the government and the media not equate state violence to the response of unarmed protesters and that they avoid the stigmatization of social protest.
7. The WSCF asks the Colombian State to urgently guarantee the physical and social integrity of all the protesters and demands that the Colombian justice and regional and international mechanisms investigate and subsequently prosecute the events that occurred during the days of protest.
8. Finally, the WSCF joins the call of the Inter-Church Dialogue for Peace (DIPAZ) and asks to defend life as a supreme good<sup>3</sup>.

In peace and solidarity,



Marcelo Leites  
General Secretary  
World Student Christian Federation (FUMEC-  
WSCF-FUACE)



Oscar Reicher Salazar  
Vice-president WSCF Latin America and the  
Caribbean



Sarahí Gomez García  
President WSCF, Latin America and the Caribbean

<sup>3</sup> : Available in <https://alc-noticias.net/es/2021/05/04/dipaz-pide-no-militarizar-la-protesta-social-y-defender-la-vida-como-bien-supremo/>