

Ambassador Antonio José Ardila
Embassy of Colombia
3 Hans Crescent
London
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Emailed to: elondres@cancilleria.gov.co

13 December 2021

Dear Ambassador,

On behalf of our over 5.5 million members in the UK, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) is extremely concerned that yet another death threat in Colombia has targeted trade unionists, politicians, journalists, academics, human rights defenders and human rights organisations.

On 4 December, a pamphlet signed by a group purporting to be the Black Eagles was made public. It targeted several high-profile people who openly campaign for worker rights, implementation of the peace agreement and accountability in widespread instances of state violence against protesters.

The TUC has had direct involvement with several of those named in the threat, principally through our campaign organisation Justice for Colombia. The TUC and its affiliated unions founded JFC in 2002 to provide permanent support for trade unionism, human rights and peace in Colombia.

On JFC delegations to Colombia, TUC-affiliated trade unionists have met with a number of the politicians targeted, including Senators Iván Cepeda, Victoria Sandino, María José Pizarro and Carlos Antonio Lozada. Senators Cepeda and Sandino have also met with our members on visits to the UK organised by JFC. These politicians are tireless advocates of the Colombian peace process who have demonstrated that they cannot be intimidated into backing away from their duties to the Colombian people.

It is also deeply alarming that the General Secretary of CUT Colombia, our sister trade union centre, has been targeted once again. Diogenes Orjuela was an invited guest at TUC Congress in 2019 and we are appalled that, despite ongoing threats to his safety, we have not seen the culprits brought to justice. The Colombian government appears to have taken insufficient action to end the country's dreadful record of violence towards our trade unionist colleagues, with the International Trade Union Confederation registering 22 murdered between March 2020 and April 2021.

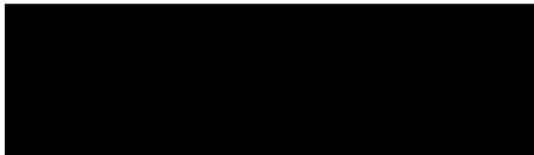
We continue to emphasise the importance of implementing the peace agreement as the most significant route to responding to the current human rights crisis in Colombia.

The TUC has supported the work of the human rights organisations ANDAS, MOVICE and the José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective, each of which campaigns for the rights of victims of conflict and state violence. These organisations are dedicated to gaining justice for some of the worst atrocities

committed in Colombia and it is utterly unacceptable that their members continue to face high risks, particularly when it is state agents who are implicated in crimes against the people they represent.

Trade unionists in the UK are resolute in their support for human rights and peace in Colombia. We therefore urge the Colombian government to make all necessary efforts to guarantee the safety of everyone named in the threats, as well as all those working to strengthen human rights and peace. We would also like to enquire as to what steps the authorities are taking to identify the persons claiming to be the Black Eagles and to hold them to account over their reprehensible campaign of intimidation.

Yours sincerely,



Frances O'Grady
General Secretary
Trades Union Congress

cc UK Embassy in Colombia