



c/o Sir Tony Lloyd MP  
tony.lloyd@parliament.uk

Iván Duque Márquez  
President of Colombia  
Casa de Nariño  
Carrera 8 No. 7-26  
Bogota  
Colombia

**9 February 2022**

Dear President,

I am writing on behalf of the Parliamentary Friends of Colombia group, made up of over 70 MPs, to express our extreme concern over ongoing violence in Colombia and the potential implications for upcoming legislative and presidential elections.

We are extremely alarmed at the targeting of political institutions including opposition political parties and trade unions. On 19 January, a car bomb detonated outside a building housing offices for human rights organisations and the CUT trade union confederation in Saravena, Arauca, killing one person and injuring five others. CUT executive members have received multiple threats in the past twelve months, while, according to the International Trade Union Confederation, Colombia remains the world's deadliest country for trade unionists, with 22 murdered from March 2020 to April 2021.

Furthermore, an explosive device was found in a restaurant that operates as a productive project for former FARC combatants in Bogota, close to the Comunes Party's offices. On the previous evening the restaurant had hosted a political event with seven electoral candidates present, including the candidate for the Historic Pact coalition, Alirio Uribe Muñoz.

We have expressed on multiple occasions our ongoing concern with the human rights crisis in Colombia and the incessant murder of community activists and the lack of security for residents in multiple parts of the country. While we are aware that killings of former combatants fell last year, the UN recently reported that 303 have been murdered since the peace agreement was signed, a horrifying number. The current escalation of violence in the region of Arauca only confirms further the urgent need for renewed

**Parliamentary Friends of Colombia**

c/o Sir Tony Lloyd MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

**Co-Chairs:** Jo Stevens MP and Sir Tony Lloyd MP

**Vice-Chairs:** Ian Lavery MP, Lord John Monks

Members: Lord John Alderdice, Rushanara Ali MP, Rosena Allin-Khan MP, Clive Betts MP, Paul Blomfield MP, Richard Burgon MP, Lord Ray Collins, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Neil Coyle MP, Jon Cruddas MP, John Cryer MP, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Clive Efford MP, Vicky Foxcroft MP, Patrick Grady MP, Andrew Gwynne MP, Louise Haigh MP, Fabian Hamilton MP, Sharon Hodgson MP, George Howarth MP, Lindsay Hoyle MP, Baroness Ruth Lister, Kerry McCarthy MP, Siobhain McDonagh MP, John McDonnell MP, Catherine McKinnell MP, Angus MacNeil MP, Chris Matheson MP, Ian Mearns MP, Grahame Morris MP, Lisa Nandy MP, Stephanie Peacock MP, Matthew Pennycook MP, Yasmin Qureshi MP, Ellie Reeves MP, Nav Mishra MP, Rachel Hopkins MP, Rachel Reeves MP, Jim Shannon MP, Baroness Angela Smith, Sir Gary Streeter MP, Gareth Thomas MP, Emily Thornberry MP, Valerie Vaz MP, Baroness Diana Warwick, Lord David Watts, Baroness Janet Whitaker, Andy Slaughter MP, Baroness Mary Goudie, Caroline Lucas MP, Catherine West MP, Sir Charles Walker MP, Chris Bryant MP, Chris Stephens MP, Dame Rosie Winterton MP, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Dan Carden MP, Ian Byrne MP, John Healey MP, Jon Ashworth MP, Kate Osborne MP, Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP, Lord Tom Sawyer, Mark Hendrick MP, Rachael Maskell MP, Baroness Christine Blower

efforts to implement the 2016 peace agreement and focus energy on reinitiating talks with the ELN.

In October 2019, we wrote to the Colombian Ambassador in the UK, HE Jose Antonio Ardila, to express our deep concern following an attack on the Comunes Party offices, as well as those of the Patriotic Union and the Communist Party, shortly before regional elections of that year. It is with sadness that this targeted political violence is continuing in the run up to the current elections.

In a presentation to the United Nations Security Council on 20 January, the head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Mattieu, reiterated the need for 'enhanced implementation' of security mechanisms created in the 2016 peace agreement, including the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics, in order to ensure the safety of more than 2,800 electoral candidates. In his latest quarterly report on the peace process, dated 27 December 2021, the UN Secretary General reported that the public policy for the National Commission for Security Guarantees has not been adopted. This is despite previous UN recommendations that this is urgently required.

In addition, we note recent findings by Colombia's Electoral Observation Mission that over half the municipalities covered by the Special Districts for Peace are at risk of violence or electoral fraud just weeks before their residents elect representatives to the Congress. These communities must be guaranteed protection to exercise their democratic mandate without fear of violence or coercion. Their belated entry into congress is vital to ensuring that Colombia's most conflict-affected and economically-marginalised groups are finally given a voice.

It is clear that, despite the appalling violence in many zones, the Colombian people continue to set an example to the world in their efforts to advance reconciliation and justice. We pay tribute to their determination to build a fairer society on the solid foundation of a stable and lasting peace. Our hope is that their commitment is reciprocated by the Colombian authorities.

With regards to these developments, we urge the Colombian government to fully implement the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics and to take all necessary steps to adopt the public policy for the National Commission on Security Guarantees. We also ask the government to provide guarantees for the safety of all electoral candidates in 2022, especially for the Comunes and Historical Pact parties and those standing as candidates in the 16 newly-created districts given the recent attacks and reports.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Lloyd', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sir Tony Lloyd MP, Co-Chair  
Parliamentary Friends of Colombia