



General Secretary

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Dear Director,

I am writing to you in my capacity as General Secretary of the ASLEF trade union for train drivers in Britain and as Chair of the British-Irish trade union campaign organisation Justice for Colombia (JFC).

My union has long campaigned in support of trade union rights, human rights and peace in Colombia. My members and I have visited Colombia with JFC on multiple occasions to witness the reality faced by trade unionists and social leaders and to observe implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. On these delegations I have met with Colombian government officials, congress members, the United Nations, trade union leaders, former combatants and many others involved in the construction of a stable and lasting peace and the defence of human rights.

I wish to raise the issue of security for members and officials in the Memoria Viva trade union for security personnel, the majority of whom are affiliated to the National Protection Unit. On my last visit to Colombia in May 2022, our delegation met with Memoria Viva officials to learn about the challenges the union faces. We were deeply alarmed to hear about the high levels of violence against the union's members, particularly as more than two-thirds of them are actively participating in the reincorporation process following the signing of the peace agreement.

According to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, as of August 2022, six members of Memoria Viva had been murdered and one other forcibly disappeared, while others had suffered attacks, threats and legal persecution. The JEP has declared that they are targeted due to their status as trade unionists, as former FARC combatants and as bodyguards to other former FARC combatants.

You are no doubt aware of Colombia's dismal record on trade union security, which has a major impact on labour rights in the country. The International Trade Union Confederation, to which over 200 million workers around the world are affiliated, consistently finds Colombia the world's most dangerous country for trade unionists. The most recent ITUC findings show that 13 were murdered last year and 22 the year before that.

While we welcome the constructive steps taken by the Historic Pact government, including the opening of peace dialogues with armed groups and the increased functioning of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, it is clear that violence against trade unionists, social leaders and former FARC combatants remains a major concern for the peace process and the rights of citizens. Memoria Viva provides vital protection but the union must be guaranteed its own protection in order to fulfil its role.



Unfortunately, we have been made aware of delays in the UNP implementing the JEP's resolutions issued on 22 August 2022. These stipulate that a) the UNP carry out investigations into levels of collective and individual risk towards Memoria Viva and adopt necessary protective measures; b) that the director's office provide documentation to support the measures; and c) that these findings are communicated to state officials and Memoria Viva's legal representatives. Although the JEP gave a deadline of 20 days, it appears these resolutions have yet to be met.

ASLEF recognises the important role the UNP has to play in strengthening human rights and ensuring stability in the peace process. We therefore ask that you make every effort to implement without further delay the JEP's resolutions so that Memoria Viva members can perform their duties in safety.

Yours sincerely,

Mick Whelan

General Secretary, ASLEF and Chair, Justice for Colombia