



National Education Union

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General Secretary  
Daniel Kebede  
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President Gustavo Petro  
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Bogota  
Colombia

c.c.  
*Federation of Colombian Educators, FECODE*  
*CUT Trade Union Federation*  
*Justice for Colombia*

11 June 2024

Dear President,

### **Persecution of Martha Alfonso**

I am writing to you as General Secretary of the National Education Union (NEU), the largest education trade union in the UK and in Europe, to express our concern at the latest acts of hostility against our Colombian teacher colleague Martha Alfonso owing to her trade union activity.

In her role as International Secretary at the Federation of Colombian Educators (FECODE), Colombia's largest single-sector trade union organisation, Martha was an official guest of the NEU annual conference in Bournemouth over 2-6 April 2024. We were delighted to welcome Martha to conference, where she met with me, NEU president Emma Rose, our International Committee and a great number of delegates to raise awareness about issues facing Colombian teachers. She also spoke at a fringe event organised with our partner organisation Justice for Colombia (JFC).

On 11 May, unknown subjects riding a motorcycle pursued Martha and her security detail in Bogota. Shortly afterwards, the same subjects were seen outside her home. Martha has received previous threats relating to her vital contributions to trade unionism and human rights. This includes her authoring of a 2019 FECODE report submitted to the transitional justice court that revealed the appalling violence historically suffered by teacher trade unionists in Colombia, with more than 1,000 killed or disappeared between 1986 and 2010.

Working with JFC, the NEU prioritises Colombia within its international campaigning and solidarity work. We have consistently supported the 2016 peace agreement, while our hopes



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were further raised by the 2022 election of the trade union-backed Historic Pact government. However, we are extremely concerned at ongoing violence against teachers, as well as stigmatisation of teacher trade unionists that has been promoted by certain opposition congress members.

The alarming situation was underlined by the murders in March and April of FECODE-affiliated trade unionists Guillermo Otero, Efrén Zapata Elorza and Luis Leones Álvarez. Such attacks continue despite your government's important efforts to improve trade union rights and security, as evident in its proposed labour reforms, and to resolve violent conflict and implement the 2016 agreement. The NEU believes the international community must continue to support these objectives as crucial to strengthening protection of trade unionists and social activists in Colombia.

Through our partnerships with JFC and the Colombian trade union movement, the NEU stands with the Colombian people as they seek to build stable and lasting peace with social justice. We extend our full solidarity to Martha and ask authorities to ensure her safety.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Kebede". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Daniel Kebede**  
General Secretary, National Education Union