

Human Rights Report for Colombia (October 15)

Just a few weeks ago Colombia's President Uribe was in the United States with a delegation of 80 people claiming the human rights situation in Colombia is better. Events of the last week show that the situation is worse.

Violent and repressive tactics are being used against thousands of Indigenous people who are participating in a national mobilization to bring attention to the humanitarian crisis they face.

In Cauca where the most severe violence is occurring 35 people were wounded yesterday when the Colombian military and anti-riot police shot indiscriminately into a crowd of 12,000 who were blockading a road.

Yesterday, the Association of Indigenous Townships (ACIN) as well as the National Organization of Indigenous People (ONIC) warned of an imminent massacre at the hands of the Colombian army and anti-riot police.

Our e-mail boxes are flooded with requests for action and support. You can help by urging the U.S. Department of State and Congress to work vigorously to ensure human rights conditions for U.S. military assistance to Colombia are being enforced.

Under U.S. legislation the Colombian military has to ensure that the Colombian Armed Forces are not violating the land and property rights of Colombia's Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and that the Colombian Armed Forces are implementing procedures to distinguish between civilians, including displaced persons, and combatants in their operations."

Please call Susan Sanford, Colombia Desk Officer at the State Department at (202) 647-3142. Here is a script of a sample message:

"I am calling today to bring to your attention the violent tactics the Colombian army and anti-riot police are using against Indigenous protesters. The worst of this violence is taking place in southwestern Colombia, the department of Cauca. I want to urge you and your colleagues to ensure that human rights conditions for U.S. military assistance are being enforced. I also encourage you to call on the Colombian government to deal with the protesters through dialogue and in a peaceful manner."

Then call your member of Congress and urge them to take action to prevent further bloodshed in Colombia. Call (202) 224-3121 and ask the Capitol Switchboard operator to connect you to your member of Congress' office. Here is a sample message:

"Just a few weeks ago Colombia's President Uribe was in the United States with a delegation of 80 people claiming the human rights situation in Colombia is better. But the Colombian army and anti-riot police are using repressive and

violent tactics against Indigenous protesters. 35 people were wounded, some possibly fatally, when the army shot indiscriminately into a crowd. Please call on the Department of State to take rigorous measures to ensure that human rights conditions for U.S. military assistance to Colombia are being enforced."