

# *Colombian president declares war on National Strike, orders clearing of roads*

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Bogota, May 18 (RHC)-- The president of Colombia, Iván Duque, ordered this Monday that public forces clear the roads of protesters, who have been demonstrating in the streets for 20 days, denouncing the repression of agents of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) and the National Army.

"We have given instructions to all levels of public forces so that in the territories with mayors and governors, they deploy their maximum operational capacity so that within proportionality and strict compliance with human rights, they allow Colombians to recover mobility and well-being," said the Colombian president.

Despite calls for a great national dialogue between the popular sectors and the Executive, Duque branded the peaceful demonstrations as an act of sabotage, "behind these blockades, there is a criminal interest to sabotage the economy and the development of the populations", he added.

"Our public force is in the territory to protect the citizens and any violation to the Law is categorically rejected," asserted Duque in the midst of hundreds of missing people in the middle of the National Strike.

Although the popular sectors and the National Committee of the Strike point out that in order to advance in the negotiations the Government must demilitarize the territories, Duque once again praised the work of ESMAD and the Army, "we will be advancing in every point of our geography to recover normality. There is no oppression here, there is democracy", he added.

For his part, Senator Iván Cepeda, who has insisted on eliminating the ESMAD and rethinking the police and military doctrine in Colombia, stated that in view of the serious allegations of disappearances and murders, he will resort to international justice instances, "I announce that in view of new crimes against humanity committed by the police and ESMAD, we will send a second communication to the International Criminal Court."

Non-governmental organizations and Senator Cepeda presented last Thursday before the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Security Council of the United Nations, a complaint against the Colombian government for crimes against humanity committed during the National Strike demonstrations.

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