

# *Latin American presidents express solidarity with the Colombian people*

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**The former presidents stressed that "protest is a right enshrined in international conventions". | Photo: EFE**

Brasilia, May 19 (RHC)-- More than 30 Latin American leaders, among them several former presidents, issued a letter to express their solidarity with the Colombian people, who for 22 days have been carrying out a National Strike against the Government, during which at least 43 people have been killed by police elements.

The statement is signed by former presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff (Brazil), José Mujica (Uruguay), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Fernando Lugo (Paraguay), Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Manuel Zelaya (Honduras), as well as former foreign ministers, legislators and political leaders of the region. "Those of us who sign this communiqué express our solidarity with the Colombian people," they said.

"We call for the deep differences that have led to violence in recent days to be resolved in a framework of dialogue and negotiation, seeking a prompt return of peace in this beloved nation." The statement noted that "protest is a right enshrined in international conventions and social mobilization is a legitimate expression of citizen participation".

However, they added, "the serious incidents of violence against defenseless human beings affect us as brother peoples of the Colombians." It becomes "urgent to preserve the guarantees for those who make use of such rights, safeguarding the human rights of citizens", they said in the letter and asked that "at the same time they guarantee security, democracy and peace."

On Tuesday, the presidents of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, and Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, also expressed, separately, their solidarity with the Colombian population, which demands President Iván Duque to cease repression and put an end to his neoliberal policies.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, elements of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squadron (ESMAD) of the Colombian National Police continued to repress several demonstrations taking place in several points of the South American country.

In social networks, it was reported that in the Chicalá neighborhood, located in Bogotá, the country's capital, 12 people were documented injured, five of them with eye injuries. In one case the loss of an eye was reported.

In Portal Americas, also in Bogota, Esmad agents carried out several repressive operations against the demonstrating population.

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