

Court bans use of Venom ammunition delivery system in Popayán, Colombia

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This measure was taken after two tutelas were studied regarding the use of the device by the police during the protests in Popayán. | Photo: El Espectador

Bogota, June 4 (RHC)-- The Tenth Administrative Court of Popayán, Colombia, ruled that the Metropolitan Police of the city, the Directorate of Citizen Security (Disec) and the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (Esmad) suspend the use of the ammunition launching system "Venom" -- used against demonstrators of

the National Strike, which is in its 37th day.

The order issued Thursday by the judicial body establishes that this measure will be maintained until a specific protocol for the device is developed, which should specify the correct way to handle it. This measure was taken after the Court studied two tutelas filed by citizens of Popayán who warned about the actions of the Esmad during the protests of last May 12, when members of the police used the device against the demonstrators, at close range and from a flat surface.

According to the order, the protocol must have "the correct way to manipulate it (the device), that is, on platforms such as ground vehicles or unmanned platforms and not from the ground, even if it is supported on a tripod."

"The elaboration of the protocol must be adjusted to the conditions established, in general terms, by International Humanitarian Law, international and national regulations on the use of non-lethal weapons," the text refers.

Likewise, it instructs to train all the members of the Esmad in Popayán, "based on the protocol that will be issued for that purpose, in the correct use of the Venom electric multiple launcher." The Court established that the Mayor of Popayán, Juan Carlos López Castrillón, or whoever exercises his functions, must supervise and guarantee compliance with the order and, after the protocol and the training of the officers are in place, will be the one to authorize its use again.

The Plataforma Grita of the non-governmental organization Temblores reported that, between April 28 and May 31, 3,789 cases of police violence against demonstrators who reject the neoliberal policies of the Government presided by Iván Duque were registered.

In addition, there have been 1,248 cases of physical violence, 45 homicides allegedly by the police, 1,649 arbitrary detentions, 705 violent interventions by the security forces. The complaints also show that 65 people suffered eye injuries, 187 were shot with firearms and 25 were victims of sexual violence.

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