

# *New day of protest in Colombia*

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By María Josefina Arce

Colombia has experienced new protests against the neoliberal policies of the government of President Iván Duque and in favor of life, peace and democracy.

Convened by the National Strike Committee, people hit the streets to demand that the Congress process the 10 bills that were filed last July before the legislative body by representatives of opposition parties.

Francisco Maltés, president of the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores and spokesman of the National Strike Committee, denounced that the government parties in Congress are obstructing the processing of the bills, without taking into account that the only purpose of these proposals is to benefit millions of Colombians, who, harassed by the economic crisis, COVID 19 and the policies of the state, are unable to

satisfy their essential needs.

According to statistics, last year 42.5% of the population was in poverty condition, which represents an increase of 6.8 percentage points compared to 2019.

The reality is that more than 21 million Colombians live in poverty, a situation that especially affects women.

The projects filed in Congress gather the most important demands of the citizenry expressed in the list of demands, made known to the government last year, and which brought millions of Colombians to the streets in the mobilizations that began at the end of 2019.

These demands were ratified in the April strike this year, which was triggered by a government proposal for tax reform, described by society as a way to plunder the already impoverished pockets of many Colombians.

For more than 50 days the protests kept the authorities in check, who were forced to withdraw the reform, but did not fail to respond with police violence that caused deaths, injuries and disappearances.

Basic income, universal free public higher education, job creation, strengthening of the public health network and support for the reactivation of the agricultural sector are some of the proposals that Colombians once again came out to demand.

Participants in the mobilizations also demanded an end to the assassinations of social leaders, human rights defenders, former guerrillas and massacres, which have already exceeded 70 this year.

More than 500 social leaders and 278 former combatants have been killed since the peace agreement was signed in 2016 between the government of then President Juan Manuel Santos and the former guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo).

The government of President Iván Duque has failed to respond to the concerns of the citizenry and the discontent of 2019 is ongoing. The National Strike Committee affirmed that it will continue in the streets if necessary.

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