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Colombia is bleeding to death: Duque responds with violence to the people's demands

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In Cali the Women are Standing.

The Colombian people have been in the streets protesting against President Ivan Duque for 14 days in a row. Social anger erupted over a tax reform that sought to increase the price of basic products, such as milk and meat, amid an unprecedented economic and health crisis.

On April 28, the people marched through the main avenues of the country with banners and pots. Duque, from his luxurious residence in the Casa de Nariño, the seat of government in Bogotá, ordered the military and members of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squadron (ESMAD) to stop these “rioters” at any cost. ESMAD is a US trained and funded attack unit connected to the Colombian Army and designed to repress movements for social justice throughout the country.

The death toll from those first nights of protests, especially in Cali, is terrifying. On May 3 alone, at least five people were killed and 33 injured with firearms throughout the country, according to local authorities.

Police brutality began to get out of Duque's hands from then on. It is no coincidence that on May 3 he decided to withdraw his controversial tax reform from his desk. Hours later, Finance Minister Alberto Carrasquilla resigned from office. Still, nothing placated the protests.

Colombians continued to take to the streets, this time rejecting police brutality, growing social insecurity, massacres, systematic assassinations of social leaders, and poverty, increasingly exacerbated by the pandemic.

Since April 28, at least 47 people have died during the demonstrations. Thirty-five of the victims were killed in Cali, the city that has become the epicenter of the protests. The Ombudsman's Office and the Attorney General's Office put the number at 27, of which only 11 were directly linked to police brutality.

Social and human rights organizations also count over 900 arbitrary detentions by ESMAD and Colombian Army agents against demonstrators.

"We are living through terrifying days. Only life in an armed conflict zone resembles what I have experienced in the last few days in Colombia," a journalist from Cali, who preferred to remain anonymous, told the Mexican daily Sin Embargo.

As soon as night falls, "helicopters start flying overhead. We hear detonations and bursts of gunfire... I had only felt this fear in Cauca, a border territory dominated by criminal gangs and paramilitary groups," the journalist explained.

In the daytime, helicopters fly overhead, and ambulance sirens sound, "but at night those sounds get louder and the gunfire, as well as the detonations, the sped-up footsteps, the shouts of 'they're killing us,'" he added.

Lucas Villa, the demonstrator who was shot eight times during a peaceful protest last week in Pereira, died on Monday night. Doctors at the San Jorge University Hospital informed that the 37-year-old man was brain dead after remaining in critical condition for six days. Immediately after the news spread, he became a symbol of one of the worst social crises the country has experienced in the last decade.

Villa, who was a university student of Sports Sciences, is the most visible face of the protests. He was attacked by unknown armed men while marching peacefully along the Pereira viaduct on the night of May 5. In some videos recorded before the attack, Lucas is seen dancing in the streets, waving to police officers, and shouting messages such as “they are killing us”.

“Lucas did not die, he was killed by the Uribist dictatorship disguised as a genocidal democracy. The corrupt and cowardly government will pay for this crime,” Colombian activist Wilson Tovar tweeted.

As the victims of State Terrorism continue to grow in Colombia, Duque insists on finding culprits outside his borders. He looked to Cuba and declared the First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Bogota Omar Garcia an “unwelcome person in the country.”

The new media campaign promoted by Colombia’s right-wing newspapers claims that the Caribbean island deployed undercover agents to fuel the protests against Duque. The administration only limited itself to say, without any specifics, that Garcia “was carrying out undue actions in the country.”

Cuba rejected the fake news, condemned the attitude of the Colombian president, and demanded that the Duque administration explain the real reasons for this political move.

Last week, from the Casa Nariño, Duque also blamed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro for being the “big inciter and financier” of the violence that is shaking Colombia.

“They had taken too long to hold Venezuela responsible,” Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza tweeted in response to Colombia’s accusations. “Duque is seeing how his policy is in the process of extinction. He has underestimated his people, and today he wants to evade his faults and incompetence. What a shame,” he added.

Colombia’s U.S.-backed oligarchy has brought nothing but pain and misery to the people, while it has threatened the peace and stability of the entire region.

“The current uprising is the Colombian administration’s responsibility. It is the cry of the people determined to end decades of suffering and build a new Colombia, based on social justice and peaceful relations with its neighbors,” US journalist Greg Butterfield said.

Source: [Resumen](#)

