

TEMBLORES

Bogotá, June 28, 2021

Communiqué to the public and the international community regarding the acts of violence committed by the Colombian Security Forces in the context of the National Strike protests

Today marks two months since the mobilizations convened within the framework of Colombia's National Strike began. Since then, our organization has focused on registering and documenting practices of police violence through our GRITA platform and on providing free specialized legal services for victims of this violence through Policarpa, our mobile justice clinic. Based on the verification of complaints and triangulation of information received through our channels, it was possible to establish that, between April 28, 2021 and June 26, 2021, at least 4,687 cases of violent acts (not including cases of disappearance¹) attributable to the Security Forces occurred. Among said cases, it was possible to identify:

- ❖ 44 homicides for which the presumed aggressor is a member of the Security Forces.
- ❖ Another 29 homicides currently undergoing a verification process of which
 - 13 are in the process of being clarified to determine if the presumed victimizer belonged to the Security Forces.
 - 4 are attributable to armed civilians in which there are indications of possible involvement by members from the Security Forces.
 - 9 are in the process of verifying the setting and context of the circumstances.
 - 3 are in the process of verification of the complaint.
- ❖ 1,617 victims of physical violence.
- ❖ 82 victims of eye injuries.
- ❖ 228 victims of gunshots.
- ❖ 28 victims of sexual violence.
- ❖ 9 victims of gender-based violence.
- ❖ 2,005 arbitrary detentions of demonstrators.
- ❖ 784 violent interventions in the context of peaceful protests.

¹ Up until June 22, 77 Urgent Search mechanisms remained active.

- ❖ 35 cases of the use of “Venom” weapons on the part of ESMAD.
- ❖ 48 cases of respiratory ailments due to the release of tear gas.

Following these two months of protests characterized by systematic violations of human rights, the NGO Temblores:

- a. Demands that access to justice for all victims and their family members be guaranteed without any distinctions whatsoever. It is essential that the disciplinary and criminal investigations that have been initiated advance in an agile, rigorous, and transparent manner, regardless of the identity of the victims or the presumed offenders.
- b. Expresses concern about the allegations of judicial set-ups that we have received. These should not be permitted under any circumstances and must be investigated by the pertinent authorities, guaranteeing the rights to the presumption of innocence and due process.
- c. Rejects any type of threat or harassment against victims, their family members, and close circles. These re-victimization practices are meant to instill fear in people to impede, stop, or hinder access to the processes of justice.
- d. Alerts and calls upon the competent state institutions to investigate the relations between state and parastatal forces in regard to the commission, omission, and cover-up of human rights violations within the context of the national strike.
- e. Invites the mass media, the national government, local governments, public figures, and other disseminators of information to not stigmatize the protests. Said stigmatization legitimizes the Security Forces’s violent behavior against the civilian population exercising their constitutional right to protest and disregards the reasons and demands that due to which citizens take to the streets.
- f. Reiterates that our work to register instances of police violence, from which the figures we have presented are derived, is the result of a rigorous process of investigation, triangulation, and comparison of the information on a case by case basis. Therefore, we categorically reject any statement or effort to delegitimize or disqualify our work and the figures presented. As an organization, we believe that the documentation of every act of police violence is one of the first steps needed for #PoliceReformNow, because it allows us to demonstrate the true magnitude and complexity of the structural problem of police violence. In this sense, we encourage state agencies of control to fulfill their responsibilities to document and investigate all that has occurred during the last two months of protest.
- g. Expresses our concern for the escalation of violent acts committed by civilians in recent days. We lament the passing of Camilo Vélez Martínez, whose death was caused by a collision with a downed cable on Ciudad de Cali Avenue in Bogota on June 25. As an organization, we reject any violation of human rights. In addition, we recognize the rights of all citizens (demonstrators, front-liners, people who use and inhabit the public space), and fight for the guarantee of those rights. Consequently, we make an emphatic call to continue to opt for a concerted solution to the tensions that persist in the country, with the objective of de-escalating violence and violations of human rights.