

A call for dialogue, peace and national reconciliation in the context of the critical situation of social unrest in Colombia

The faith leaders who sign this statement join the call of Pope Francis on Sunday 23 May 2021 for a "serious dialogue" to find a way out of the social crisis which has been going on in Colombia since 28 April, recognising "the right to demonstrate peacefully".

We join the Church and the Colombian people at this difficult time during the demonstrations and the complex social situation that Colombia has been experiencing since 28 April, to reaffirm that peaceful protest is a right, and to reject acts of violence, wherever they may come from, human rights violations, attacks on physical safety and life [or attacks on life and limb], disappearances, and the abuse of force, because "*violence does not resolve anything; it produces suffering and death*".

We echo the bishops of Colombia who, on 23 May, issued [a new appeal](#) to follow the path of dialogue in seeking agreements that will enable Colombia to overcome this difficult period it is currently experiencing. "*We reaffirm that dialogue is the most appropriate way to recognise what should always be affirmed and respected in society; to listen, understand and respond effectively to the demands of those who have resorted to the right of peaceful protest, and to build together the reconciliation and peace that we long for.*"

We recognise the pain and poverty being experienced in Colombia and express our solidarity with all victims of violence.

Following the recommendation of the bishops of Colombia, we call for the path of dialogue to be chosen, for citizens' demands to be listened to and for compromises to be found that contribute to reconciliation and peace.

Pope Francis said, "*I pray that the beloved Colombian people may receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that through serious dialogue just solutions may be found to the many problems they are suffering from, especially those who living in greatest poverty due to the pandemic*".

Signatories:

- † Werner FREISTETTER, Military Bishop, responsible for development cooperation and global church of the Austrian Bishop's Conference, Coordination Office of the Austrian Bishop's Conference (KOO), Austria
- † Stephan ACKERMANN, Bishop of Trier, Germany
- † Karl BORSCH, Auxiliary Bishop of Aachen, Germany
- † Helmut Karl DIESER, Bishop of Aachen, Germany
- † Felix GMÜR, Bishop of Basel, Switzerland
- † John ARNOLD, Bishop of Salford, Chair of CAFOD, England and Wales, UK
- † Declan LANG, Bishop of Clifton, Chair of the International Affairs Dept, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, UK
- † Hugh GILBERT, Bishop of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK
- † John KEENAN, Bishop of Paisley, Scotland, UK
- † Brian MCGEE, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, Scotland, UK
- † Joseph TOAL, Bishop of Motherwell and Bishop President of SCIAF, Scotland, UK

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(available in English or Spanish)